

INSIDE

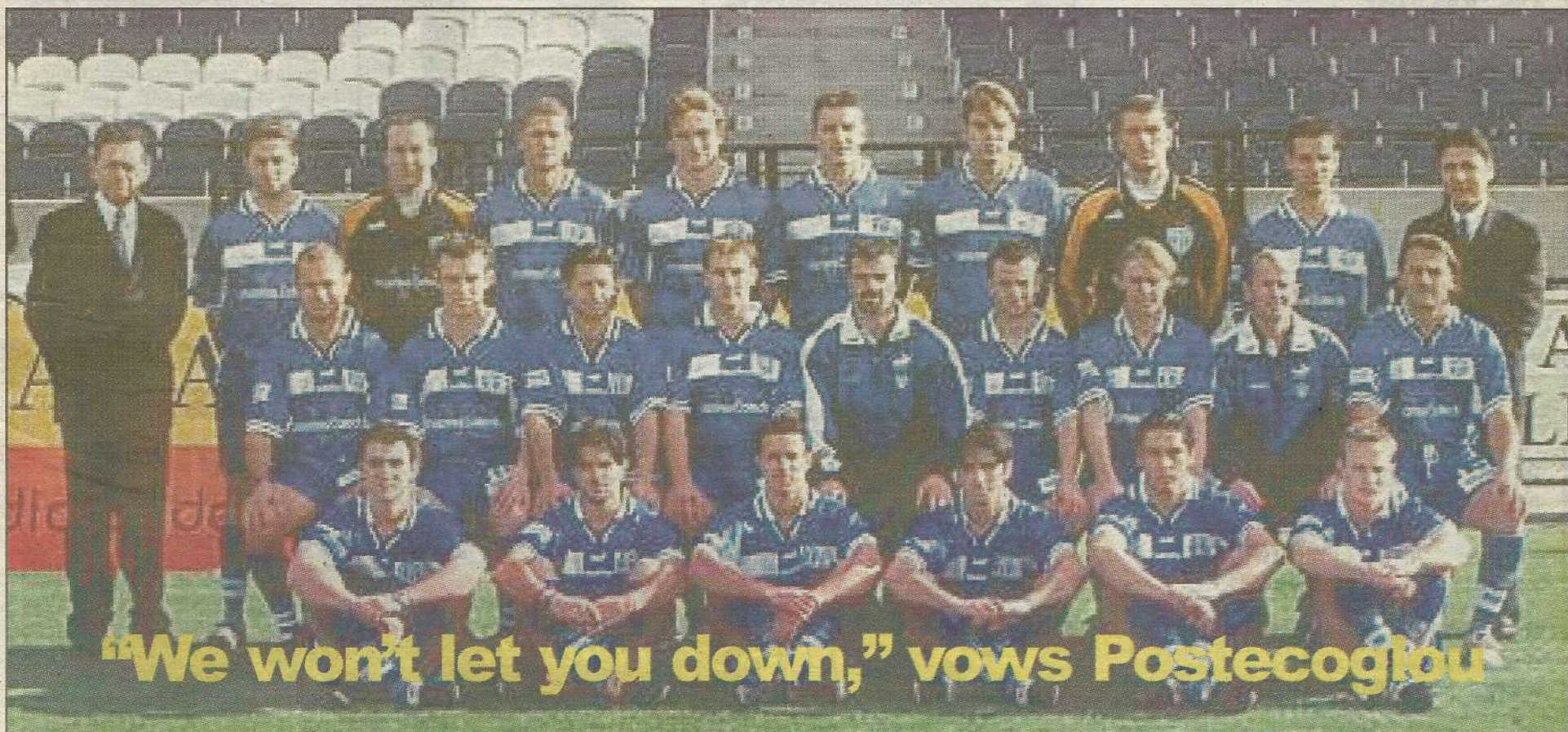
Your quality Australian soccer paper for the new century

SOCCER

Registered with Australia Post as a publication PP224696/00050 - ISSN 1321-8980

January 4, 2000. \$3.00

ANGE'S ANZACS READY FOR BATTLE



"We won't let you down," vows Postecoglou

By Greg Blake

Fausto De Amicis tended his vegetable garden, Steve Panopoulos attended to last-minute packing and David Clarkson stewed over the early Sunday morning airport call.

Con Blatsis simply couldn't wait to rock-and-roll with the world's best.

With the taxing NSL regular season temporarily forgotten and the final domestic training sessions completed, South Melbourne's new stars of the world footballing stage had just one final day to con-

template the amazing journey ahead before flying out of Melbourne with a 35-strong touring party at 8 am last Sunday.

As most of us nursed dozy hangovers from New Year's Eve the South Melbourne stars were preoccupied with what are shaping as the defining moments of their footballing lifetimes at the inaugural World Club Championships in Brazil, commencing this week.

As last Saturday evening approached it was a time of contemplation for them all.

For all his domestic success - five grand finals and four championships just

for starters - elder statesman De Amicis was almost reduced to kid in a candy store stature.

"This is bigger than Ben Hur, isn't it?" he declared.

"I mean this just tops it off (career wise).

"Playing for Australia and now this - it's just unbelievable.

"I'm serious. I just can't believe I'm going.

"I could have been anyone in the world, anyone in Australia - and it's us.

"I just keep thinking about how cool it will be going out on to the park to play

against these people.

"It's not practise, it's not a training camp and it's not friendly games; these teams are preparing to play serious football against us.

"It really is amazing."

Like most of his teammates, De Amicis is angered by the criticism of South Melbourne's chances of pulling off the improbable of results against the likes of Vasco and Manchester United.

Continued page three

Plus: NSL All-Stars, Nick Rizzo, Super League, Aussies Abroad, Zeljko Susa, Matt Horsley, Chad Mansley, Greg Blake and all the NSL from last Tuesday and the weekend. HAPPY 2000!

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Olyroo Special

Olyroo Nick Rizzo: Here to show what he can do

By Aidan Ormond

It's been a frustrating time for Australia's dynamic midfielder Nick Rizzo. Injury forced him out for four months in 1999 and his new coach at first division club Steve Coppell has rarely given him the opportunity to show what he can do.

Certainly the long-suffering Palace fans feel he should be given more of a role in the struggling side's fortunes, if the Internet fan sites are any indication.

Yet Rizzo is an integral part of Raul Blanco's plans and is always keen to put on the green and gold.

"Yeah, being back with the Aussie lads is always good, plus I get to see my family which helps," he said from his Adelaide hotel.

"The injury is fine now, I am just trying to get back to full fitness. To be honest, I don't think my manager at Palace is bothered that I have to leave the club to play in this tournament," he noted wryly.

The Olyroos play Nigeria this Sunday and Rizzo is aware of the Africans' talent.

"I have played them (Nigeria) at the U/17 World Cup in 1995 and we all know how good they can be, but we have a quality squad. I know all the players in the Olyroos except Zelic and Wehrman who I met

today.... it's a strong squad."

Playing at Palace has been a little like an Aussie 'home away from home', with captain Craig Foster, keeper Steve Mautone (who played in the club's 3-2 home win over Walsall last week) plus Craig Moore and Steve Horvat spending some time at Palace.

Having said that the skillful Rizzo - who destroyed Brazil in the Olyroo Challenge in 1998 - is not that impressed with first division football after spending two years at Liverpool.

"The Walsall game was terrible, and that's what the first division is all about. There is no rhythm of play, no passing, it's just get the ball forward as quick as you can and try to score from a corner or throw or whatever, there's just no rhythm."

Things were much different last season when he arrived from Anfield. Terry Venables - a Nick Rizzo fan - brought him to London and played him regularly.

Sadly the business side of the club did not pan out as expected; Venables has since left and the club is currently asking fans to contribute money to buy the club.

"Yeah sometimes I miss playing for Liverpool but I don't regret the move. I have settled well into London."

And after the Olympics - when he will be on show to the rest of the world later this year - he may be settling into a new club?



INSIDE SOCCER

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Photography: Allsport, Joe Palos, Brett Kluznik, Matt Curtis, Michael Cronin

Publisher: Inside Soccer Pty Ltd
A.C.N. 088 107 822

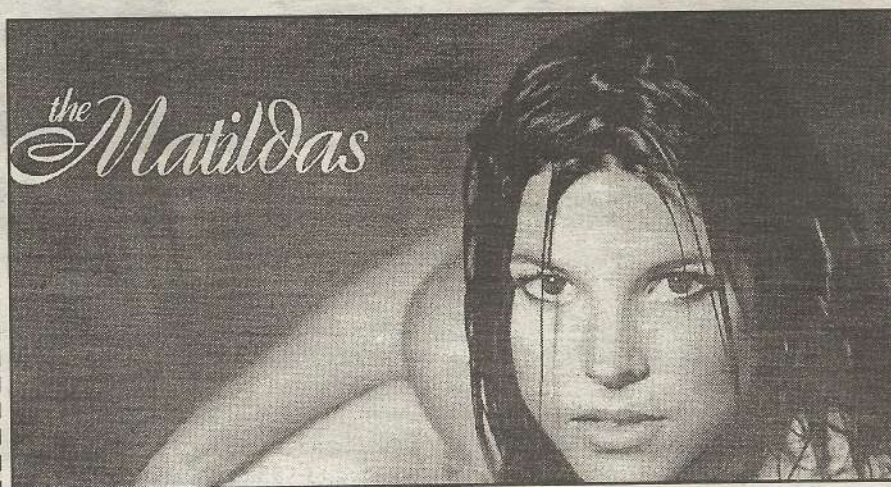
Printing: Apex Printers Arncliffe NSW Tel: (02) 9597 6866

Distribution: Wrapaway, Marrickville NSW Tel: (02) 9550 1622

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ONCE IN A LIFETIME OPPORTUNITY FOR SOUTH MELBOURNE



Will South be celebrating this Friday morning after they have played Brazil's Vasco?

Continued from front page

"It really makes me sick, because we've achieved something," he explained.

"The funny thing is that we've been shown plenty of respect by other (NSL) teams.

"In recent games just about everyone has wished us luck over there, so that's been great."

Clarkson is a little more phlegmatic.

"I'm a bit disappointed (at the criticism) but I'd rather them bag us for going than have them bagging us for not going," he explained.

"And I really believe that there is no better team than us to be representing Australia in this tournament.

"I really have no idea why even our own supporters are bagging us, I don't understand at all."

As with most of the South Melbourne stars, the Brazil trip had seemed almost a dream until the reality of last-minute packing and preparations hit home following the club's final 1999 NSL game at Sydney United last Tuesday.

"It's very exciting - huge, in fact - but it seems to have come around so quickly," Clarkson observed.

"We had the build-up to Fiji (for the qualifying series) and the normal NSL games and it was almost like Brazil was in the background.

"Then all of a sudden last week

we've realised that we really are going."

Clarkson believes that reality really hit home after the club's final training session on New Year's Eve, when coach Ange Postecoglou impressed upon his charges the magnitude of the matches to come.

"He said that there was probably no bigger tournament outside the World Cup and that for any one of us these games could change the course of their lives forever," Clarkson said.

"I think that really rammed the message home."

"Yeah, there's no doubt that (the excitement) is really starting to kick in," said Panopoulos, as he completed his packing on Saturday night.

"For me it is the high-point of my career for sure - it's just so big.

"Like most of the other boys it annoys me big time that instead of some people saying 'we hope you do us proud', they're telling us we're going to Brazil to get flogged.

"I'll tell you though, there is a feeling amongst the boys that we can sneak a surprise or two.

"It's like when we went to Fiji and we were the big guns and in the first game there we were totally taken by surprise and were losing 1-0 with a couple of minutes to go.

"Mate, it's eleven against eleven and anything can happen."

At just 22 years-of-age Blatsis is more inclined towards treating this tournament as a grand adventure.

"I don't think it has quite hit me yet," he said on Saturday evening.

"I've been overseas before (with the Young Socceroos and Olyroos) and I'll just take it as it comes.

"Maybe it will hit me when I get to the hotel and see Manchester United there.

"I mean, I know it's a big event and I do know that I am a very lucky boy to have this opportunity.

"The truth is that I just can't wait to step out on to the field."

Although South Melbourne is set to net in excess of \$3 million just for playing in the series, neither Blatsis nor his teammates are too concerned with the personal financial rewards to come.

"The money is just a bonus," explained Blatsis.

"The thing is you couldn't even pay to play in this competition.

"All of us as a group have worked hard together and all of this is reward for having worked so hard for so long.

"It really annoys me that some so-called supporters aren't getting behind us and that some people are so negative, but all that does is make me want to get out there and prove them all wrong."

Coach Postecoglou believes will be the experience of the footballing lives of many of his charges.

"They will be walking in out in front of maybe 160,000 people to play against the likes of Romario, Edmundo and Beckham," he told *Inside Soccer*.



Socceroo Fausto De Amicis: "Anything can happen," says South's flying midfielder.

"They are going to be playing out of their skins, they will run until they drop.

"For all of them they see it as a fantastic opportunity and everyone will lift, I'm sure of that.

"We will play this competition as well as we possibly can."

De Amicis echoes the sentiments of his coach.

"Anything can happen," he declared.

"The players are really fired up for this and we will give it our best.

"For us it's more than just another game and I'm sure our players will lift simply because they know that they have to.

"Lots of wives and girlfriends and family are going because we all know that this may never happen again.

"It will be a fantastic experience for all of us and we just can't wait to get out on to the park.

"We are looking forward to the challenge."

*The first game for South in the World Club Championship against Vasco da Gama is live on free-to-air TV this Friday morning at 9.30am.

South then play Necaxa of Mexico on Jan 8 and Manchester United on Jan 11.

Go South!

"It really makes me sick, because we've achieved something," he explained. "The funny thing is that we've been shown plenty of respect by other (NSL) teams. In recent games just about everyone has wished us luck over there, so that's been great."

Fausto De Amicis on South's WCC challenge

READERS' FORUM

I find it hard to believe the stuff being written about Paul Okon by some well resourced and knowledgeable soccer scribes as well as the current coach of the Socceroos, Frank Farina.

Paul Okon is without doubt a good player, but to consider Paul ahead of Ned (right) not only for a position in the starting line-up of the current Socceroos, but as also captain of the team begs the question; 'where have they been watching his performances?'

As far as I can tell, Paul sits on the bench for Fiorentina week-in-week-out, so where do they get these opinions from?

When comparing both players I believe Ned is arguably a better player, but availability and contribution to Australian soccer surely makes Ned stand out head and shoulders above Paul.

The situation has to be



resolved and fast.

Ned is our best ever soccer product, it would be a tragedy if he was overlooked for the 2002 World Cup campaign.

'The Guru' Steven Predny

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BIG GAME AT BREAKERS

This Friday night at Breakers Stadium is the game of the round: Newcastle Breakers v Sydney Olympic, and this should be as big a game as any down there in Newcastle this season.

If the local side can pull almost 7,000 for their last home game (Sydney Utd on Sunday) one shudders to think what they can attract this time.

The ground record goes back to 1991, a figure that is surely going to be tested, especially if league-leading Olympic's fans make the journey up the expressway.

Breakers' defender Glenn Sprod (above), speaking with Chris Dunkerley felt it was his side's sternest test: "It will be a



big contrast facing Olympic; that will probably be the biggest test here at home this year.

"We'll knuckle down to training this week and see how we go."

It was a good weekend for Newcastle with their Youth team also winning 1-0, courtesy of a Peter Juchniewicz goal.



GREG BLAKE

C7 SOCCER COMMENTATOR



A little fanfare, if you please. I suspect the event passed without notice even in Adelaide, where the City/Farce mob are too preoccupied with imploding to have even realised that superstar Damian Mori's strike in the 2-0 win against the Kingz on December 28 was his 133rd NSL goal.

The relevance, of course, being that that goal put him level second on the all-time NSL scorers list alongside legendary John Kosmina, who finished his career with 133 goals.

Mori (right) is now just a mere four strikes short of Rod Brown's all-time NSL record of 137 goals, set a couple of seasons back during Brown's swansong NSL campaign with the Strikers.

Based on Mori's career strike rate of 0.480 goals per game the little champ should grab the all-time mark some time this season, probably inside the next eight or nine weeks.

We saw the AFL-driven fuss made over Tony Lockett's similar feat for the Sydney Swans in 1999, but I wonder if Soccer Australia or Adelaide Farce care enough to offer Mori the same as he approaches his stellar NSL milestone.

Mori is a dead-set champion of our domestic competition.

Already he has set a string of records, including:

- Youngest player to 100 goals (age 27)
- Quickest-ever goal in a match (3.7 sec's)
- Quickest-ever 50 goals (57 matches)
- Most goals for any one NSL club (113 for Ad.City).

As usual, the media has been almost totally preoccupied with affairs other than the actual game itself lately.

Could we put just a little more effort into hyping up the games, the characters, the players and the record-breakers, like Mori, who are the heart-beat of the domestic competition?

There's a real whiff of rebellion in the air following Soccer Australia's decision to press ahead with the sweeping changes to the NSL for next summer.

As we now know, despite the existing NSL club's overwhelming vote to retain the status quo for a further twelve months, the board of SA decided that it would go with a 12-team NSL and 10-strong second division for season 2000/2001.

Few are convinced that the second division is a viable concern and even fewer are satisfied that the revised NSL will be ready to roll off the showroom floor in the limited time available.

"This is just another decision to appease the states and it's just not good enough," one NSL club high-roller told me last week.

"It's bloody outrageous that the states have such a say in the running of the NSL and quite a few clubs are really quite angry about it."

"Surely the (NSL) clubs should be running their own competition, or at least have a bigger say in it."

"Believe me, the issue isn't dead yet."

Having lived through several incarnations of the NSL competition since 1977 I am certainly not convinced that a second division is viable, particularly given that there appears to be no definitive plans in place for the new competition at this late stage.

And nobody has come up with a convincing argument to defend what appears to be the purely arbitrary figure of 12 clubs to play in the top flight.

Who misses out should 13 clubs fit the criteria, or who gets the nod should only nine clubs fit the bill?

I've seen change for change sake too many times not to be skeptical of this hasty 're-launch' of the national competition.

It appears some sweetheart dealing with certain media outlets has ensured good public relations for the decisions taken.

But the reality is that SA has not done nearly enough to actually substantially justify such dramatic and sweeping changes.

The deeper into the season we get the less decided home ground advantage has become - or so it seems.

Going into last week-end's first round of NSL matches in 2000 teams playing on the road this season boasted a 37-25-43 record.

That figure was substantially boosted by away teams going 13-4-7 in the final three rounds before the new year.

League leader, Sydney Olympic, has already won six of its seven road games this summer and Branko Culina's

team looks well on track to tackle Marconi's all-time league best of 11 away wins in one season, set in 1989.

Olympic is one of eight teams with an away record as good as or better than their home record this season thus far.

The other teams traveling well in 1999/2000 are Carlton, Gippsland, Kingz, Marconi, Northern Spirit, Newcastle and Wollongong.

Just on 'away' form, how about we stick another nail in South Melbourne's 'three-peat' coffin.

Assuming South Melbourne will have to come through the elimination route to defend its title - and thus has no hope of hosting another grand final in Melbourne - you wouldn't back 'em with bad money this summer.

That long-awaited win at Sydney United on December 28 was South's first interstate success for nearly one full year, the Melbourne club having not previously scored an interstate win since January 10, 1999, when it beat then lamentable Canberra Cosmos at Bruce Stadium.

Just hope the travel bug doesn't affect them too badly in Brazil.

It's 'Hanging Judge' time, with Brett Hugo the big mover prior to last weekend's round of matches.

Hugo bagged a pair at the Perth - Marconi game on December 28 to move to six for the season, just behind leader Matthew Breeze, who boasted a league best seven red card victims before the first full league round of the new millennium.

It's an intoxicating football success story, although we're still a long way from writing the final chapter.

I don't know about "sexy football" (see last week's 'Inside Soccer', when the grog was obviously talking), but the marriage of 'sleeping giant' Sydney Olympic and 'oh, so close' Branko Culina has been harmonious thus far and Olympic will almost certainly have a big say in the finals this year.

That is a surprise in itself.

The important thing for Olympic is that it is winning when it counts - in the big games.

Prior to yesterday's game against Perth at home Culina's team was a perfect 4-0-0 against other top six teams; the best record of any team in the competition to this point.

CHAD MANSLEY

Two goals for Aussies at Man Utd confirms youngster's potential

By Aidan Ormond

When you think of football production lines soccer over the last twenty years one of the most fertile in Australia has been Newcastle.

Although the area's NSL potential is only now being realized - after the supernova-like success twenty years ago of Newcastle KB United - it hasn't stopped ex-Liverpool star Craig Johnston, plus the likes of Troy Halpin, Clayton Zane and Richard Johnson from forging successful careers at the highest level.

Ironically all those above players have represented Australia, except perhaps the most famous of them, Craig Johnston.

coming in a memorable 3-3 draw against the team he supports, Manchester United.

Australian coach Chris James described the tour as the best performances from any Australian Schoolboys side.

"It was a great experience playing against those teams. They have a lot of good players coming through. I think we compare quite well - perhaps they are a little stronger on the ball though," said Mansley.

"Everyone contributed for Australia on this tour," was his way of not wanting to single out any player.

"We saw Watford play and we spoke with Socceroo Richard Johnson and he was great. He talked with us and gave us

would have been told to go through the Breakers (he is out of contract at the end of this season.)

"Against Manchester Utd in the 3-3 draw it was unbelievable. I follow Man Utd so it was even more special.

"The highlight was to be able to compete well and to prove myself against their players."

One particular high point for the Aussie 'Schoolroos' was the 4-3 win over the hitherto unbeaten Ireland schoolboys (the Irish had gone three years without being beaten.) The tourists also beat Fulham 3-2 and drew 3-3 with English colleges.

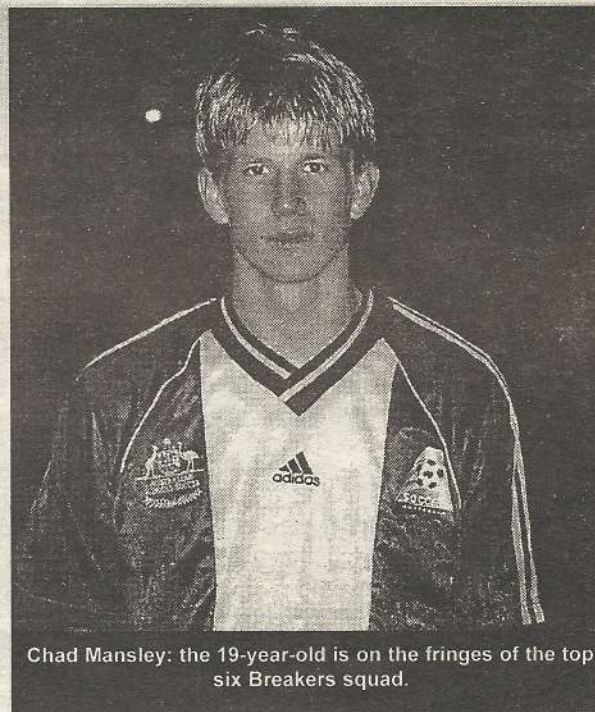
The AIS hosted the national schoolboys championships earlier last year, the national side being chosen from that tournament. Mansley played for NSW despite being based in NNSW, which didn't field a team.

The youngster is now hoping to make his mark with Newcastle Breakers' first team, but with Harper and Buonavoglia it will be difficult to break into the front spots.

"Pre-season was intense. It's been great to get knowledge and advice from the likes of Andy Harper. And Lee Sterrey and David Lowe are very supportive."

Mansley - a former Cardiff, Dudleigh, and Adamstown junior - played as a central striker for Australia, although Sterrey feels he is best suited to playing in the hole just behind the front two.

"He's only come out of last year's youth side so he has time. He has every chance of being a good footballer though," noted the astute Breakers coach, who knows a thing or two about young players, having coached Marconi's youth team, including at the Viareggio world youth tournament in Italy.)



Chad Mansley: the 19-year-old is on the fringes of the top six Breakers squad.

"The good thing about Chad is every time he plays a game his shirt weighs a tonne after the match with all the hard work he puts in. He has a good attitude and he listens which is a plus too.

"I've played him just behind the front two because I am still not sure if he has the pace to trouble first grade defenders at this point, but certainly somewhere in the front triangle is his spot."

Mansley played for the first team against Adelaide Force earlier this season, which was "the highlight of my career so far," said the well-spoken teenager.

His Mum is naturally supportive. "We were very excited when he was picked for Australia. He's a good kid who actually loves training; in fact we have a goal set up in the backyard so he can train by himself. He always liked

his soccer ... he started when he was five. He trains like he plays, which is very competitive.

"Yeah, if he can play full-time that would be great. I hope that he can. I'd miss him if he had to go overseas though," she added.

Chad Mansley has it all in front of him; it's now up to him to prove he can do it in the NSL.



Chad Mansley at the club he supports, Manchester United's Old Trafford. The young Breaker scored two against Man Utd as the Aussie schoolboys drew 3-3 on their UK tour.

19-year-old fringe Breakers striker Chad Mansley has also represented Australia, this time for the Australian Schoolboys on their just-completed triumphant ten-game UK tour.

Mansley was named player of the tour after a trip that included 12 goals in ten matches for the blond forward, two

some good advice. West Ham and Tranmere was another game we saw live.

"It's soccer mad over there, it was brilliant. There are different conditions though- the fields were in very good nick despite the rain.

"I'd say there would have been agents but if anyone was interested they

S-NEWS

INSIDE SOCCER'S AUSTRALIAN NEWS AND GOSS

STEVE HORVAT

The strong rumour out of Melbourne is that Socceroo Steve Horvat is in Geelong over the festive season and is apparently being looked at by one of the Melbourne-based NSL clubs. Horvat has had a horror run of injuries of late and was at one point with Crystal Palace.

AFL'S PARANOIA HAS A HISTORY

In a turn of the century supplement article in the Canberra Times Robert Messenger writes about the battle of the football codes in Australia pre-WWI. He concentrates quite a bit on how a man called Simons would "perceive Australian boys being brainwashed by being forced to play soccer. He claimed soccer was taking over from the native game in West Australian schools" Apparently Simons went to WA in 1905 and promoted Australian football which was greatly threatened by soccer at the time. There is quite a lot written about soccer v Australian football in WA at the

time. The article tellingly says that "unlike in WA, education authorities in Victoria ensured soccer was kept out of the schools". A very interesting read for the historically minded, and a reminder that animosity to soccer by Australian football



officials has a long history, well predating Wayne Jackson. Thanks Peter Kunz for that.

LUST IN SPACE

Some would say you can be lost in the Space at Olympic Park when Carlton

plays (read the club's fanzine *My Blue Heaven* for some supporters' views on this), but one band in Melbourne is doing some-

thing about that. *Lust in Space* has recorded a brilliant song that has just been released as a Carlton club song. It's called 'A Dream won't do' and S-news is happy to say, it ROCKS! Seriously, if you like Oasis then this is the one for you. It has a killer chorus and if that doesn't get you, the melody will. We will give you the chance to win copies of this great CD, details next week in IS. And still on Carlton, Fawcner Soccer Club has joined the innovative Carlton Feeder System. Fawcner is one of Melbourne's strongest junior soccer clubs, and have a team competing in the Southern Division of the National Youth League.

3AK AND SOCCER

In Melbourne listen out for C7 and Inside Soccer columnist Greg Blake, who has just signed to do a series of reports for 3AK. The host of the show is Arthur Higgins, who would be remembered for his TV work in the past. What folks may not know is that not only is he a football (as in world game) fan, he actually trialed with Everton as a youth. Bet you didn't

know that!

OUR HARRY HONoured BY OFC
Australia's Harry Kewell has been named on as Oceania's Footballer of the Year, ahead of Mark Viduka. Kewell will receive his trophy at a FIFA award night in Germany next month.

DANIELA RACO

Last week in IS we found out that big Force keeper Vilson Knezevic does impersonations of Les Murray, is a bit of a seafood chef and doesn't wear boxers or briefs! The big fella was interviewed by our Melbourne-based 'soccer girl about town' Daniela Raco. Thanks for that and sorry a byline was left off. Well it was Christmas and S-news was, shall we say, somewhat tired and emotional at some points of the paper's production.

UNITED GET SHIRTY

There was an embarrassing incident for Sydney Utd in the Sunday Breakers game. The home crowd was amazed when Deak came on and proceeded to grab the shirt off Bosevski, turn it inside out and continue with the game. Apparently United found that they had only eleven playing shirts from their away strip when they arrived at Breakers Stadium!

SAINTS PLANNING A HEAVENLY FUTURE

INSIDE SOCCER'S super league writer BEN CUBBY takes a look at the Saints and Berries in the lead-up to the start of the NSW Super League

St. George has returned to the NSW Super League after finishing second in Division One last year and a feeling of optimism is sweeping through the club.

There are ambitious plans for long-term success, although at this stage consolidation in the top league is the priority.

The experienced John Sentas has replaced Paul Carter as head coach and has added a host of new faces to the playing roster.

Veterans Mark Brennan and Stefan Janic, along with highly-rated young midfielder Simon Verrinder, are the only remaining members of the 1999 first grade squad.

Sentas' connections with the Sydney Olympic club have helped to lure a number of players across from Belmore Oval.

Elias Augerinos is foremost amongst this group, which also includes promising striker Jim Bakis and defender Matt

Galea.

Forward Angelo Petratos, who has played professional football in Greece, is another former Olympic player to make the move to St. George.

Goalkeeper Trinity Allen left during the summer, but the very capable Les Bihari has arrived from Ryde City to take over the No. 1 jersey.

Defender Nick Bolianitis - who was coached by Sentas at lower division club Alexander Warriors - has joined St. George from Stanmore Hawks and Bill Petrovski has made the short trip over from Rockdale Suns.

Both these players did well in Division One last season and were selected to tour New Caledonia with the NSW representative side.

Luke Cairney, Anthony Adamo and Jamie Danaskos are youngsters who have been given the chance to prove themselves in first grade after progressing up through the junior ranks.

Form in trial matches has been rather unconvincing so far, but club officials have stressed that the team can make an impact once the real games begin.

Off the field, the Saints are planning a series of major improvements to bring their stadium up to NSL standard.

Already the dressing rooms have been renovated, the grandstand spruced up and the pitch re-surfaced at St George Stadium in Rockdale.

The main developments are still in the pipeline, though. The wealthy consortium that owns the club has submitted proposals to the local council outlining a significant increase in the seated capacity of the ground, and the addition of a licensed club to the complex.

Apparently there is money available to begin to carry out the multi-million dollar plans within the stated time-frame of eighteen months, although many will believe it only when they see it.

St. George is placing a renewed emphasis on youth this season, in terms of both players and supporters.

Former Ipswich player Mark Brennan has been installed as the Saints development officer and the club is planning to issue free entry passes to all registered under-16 soccer players in the district.

It looks like the beginning of an exciting time for the St. George club. Hopefully their off-field ambitions can be matched by their efforts on the pitch.

Over at Henson Park, long-time Canterbury-Marrickville coach John Xipolitas is busy finalizing his squad before next weekend's kick-off.

Major signing Frank Mikuletic has moved from Leichhardt Tigers to replace Steve Tolios, who is now reserve 'keeper at Sydney United.

Striker Nick Bosevski has gone to the same club and the Berries are close to acquiring Northern NSW forward Karl Freeman to fill the gap.

Freeman arrives with quite a reputa-

tion, after scoring a hat-trick to destroy a Super League select side in last season's NSW-NNSW challenge match. He should combine well with pacy forward Jim Nikas.

Former Young Socceroo defender Scott Wells is another new face at the club; he spent some time with the Central Coast outfit last year.

The departures of Jane Talceviski and Matt Shepherd to other Super League clubs has allowed Xipolitas to bring a number of younger players into first grade.

Terry Sidiratos, Adrian Vizzari, Vince Condoluci and Joseph Ferraro were all part of the successful under-18 team in 1999 and now find themselves in senior team contention.

They are joined by Bill Tsioumas and Alex Alexander from the Blacktown under-18's and Joel Donnelly from First Division club Bathurst '75.

Experienced players like Simon Fedele, Steve Christoforidis, Adrian Molachino and Jose Mendes will again form the backbone of the team.

The explosive Jim Nikas will be hoping for a goal-rich year after a relatively lean time in '99.

The club has retained its tenancy at the well-appointed Henson Park ground and all of last year's sponsors remain in the fold. Even the 11-man board was re-elected without any change.

'Stability' is the watchword out Canterbury way these days.

They are unlikely to be celebrating a premiership this season, but the Berries are hoping to improve upon last season's eighth place finish.

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NEXT HOME GAME
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PANTHERS**

V

MACARTHUR RAMS

GROUND: Andrews Rd, Penrith

DATE: Sat 8 January 2000

U/18s: 3pm
U/21s: 5pm

FIRST GRADE: 7PM



Super League

Wednesday 5 January

Manly Warringah v Canterbury Marrickville, Cromer Park
18s only - 6.00pm

Friday 7 January

Bankstown v Parramatta, Jensen Park
18s only - 6.30pm

Saturday 8 January

Kick-off times:

7.00pm (1st grade); 5.00pm (21s); 3.00pm (18s)

Sutherland v Leichhardt, Seymour Shaw Park

St George v Bonnyrigg, St George Stadium

Penrith v Macarthur, Andrews Road Field

Manly Warringah v Canterbury Marrickville, Cromer Park

Sunday 9 January

Kick-off times:

7.00pm (1st grade); 5.00pm (21s); 3.00pm (18s)

Fairfield v Central Coast, Nineveh Field

Eastern Suburbs v Blacktown, David Phillips Field

Kick-off times:

6.00pm (1st grade); 4.00pm (21s)

Bankstown v Parramatta, Jensen Park

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ROGER SLEEMAN MEETS A WOLLONGONG LEGEND MIGHTY MATT HORSLEY

Season 1989/90 was a watershed in Australian football with the introduction of summer competition to the NSL.

Hopes were high that a change in season would provide an upturn in fortune for the game given there would be no competition with the major codes for media coverage.

In that same season, seventeen-year-old Matt Horsley was signed by the Wollongong Wolves after winning the Illawarra Premier League Player of the Year award in consecutive seasons.

Just as summer football has not grabbed the headlines its creators had quite imagined, Matt Horsley hasn't quite achieved the goals that his ability warranted.

Nevertheless, Horsley has become a cult figure on the South Coast, creating a tradition in modern football which rivals Jim Kelly's Gang, Noddy Alston and Peter Wilson.

In this interview, Horsley discusses his life in football, his disappointments and his visions for the future of the game on the south coast.

ROGER SLEEMAN: When you were signed by the Wolves in your first season, how dramatic was the transition from local league football to the NSL?

MATT HORSLEY: Many people involved with amateur football question the standard of the professional game in Australia but I can assure them the gap between the professional and amateur game is huge.

I played my first game for Wollongong in a pre-season cup match against Apia and due to my failure to mark a player at two corner kicks, we lost the game 3-2.

I was promptly despatched to the youth team where I remained until the last four matches before regaining a place in the first team. I never forgot the experience and have never been selected for youth team football since, except when returning from injury.

R.S. Apart from the discipline required, what other factors emphasised the difference between the amateur and professional game?

M.H. In my amateur career I was free to play in a mainly attacking role on the right flank. Rather than marking man-to-man I marked space and it was usually the tall defenders who marked the strikers at set pieces.

The strategy was, if attacking players like myself could hold the ball and have defenders in pursuit, you weren't needed for defensive duties.

Because the professional game is much tighter, every player has to pick up an opponent at set pieces. Also, depending on your formation on the day, it may well be that attacking options are limited due to the strength of your opponents.

For example, when we went to Adelaide three weeks ago we played with only two men up front and five in midfield but the 2-1 away win justified the tactics. In the NSL, one lapse in concentration in defence can cost you the three points.

R.S. Early in your career, your free running spirit drew comparisons with a young Robbie Slater. However, apart from a couple of selections in the NSW squad and one Soccerroo squad selection, your talent was never sufficiently rewarded at representative level.

Can you explain this?

M.H.

I remember back in January 1994 when Dave Ratcliffe stated in a local football publication that I should've played at the Barcelona Olympics.

It would've been a great start to any representative career but in fairness it was a strong side which represented Australia and when you consider players like Brad Maloney couldn't get a run, it wasn't a disgrace not to be selected.

There's also a school of thought which suggests teams like Wollongong were unfashionable at the time and selectors were loathe to look seriously at players, especially when there was frequent discussion about dropping the club from the NSL.

I was selected in the initial squad for the home internationals against Colombia in 1994 but along with Con Boutsianis I failed to make the final squad.

Also in 1998 when Alvin Ceccoli and Scott Chipperfield were selected in the Confederations Cup squad, I was on standby, so at least I hadn't been forgotten completely.

R.S. In your early days in the national league were you ever approached to play overseas and do you have any regrets about not playing at a higher level?

M.H. At that time there were no player managers so the opportunity didn't arise. I suppose if I'd played at Barcelona things may have happened because many of the players gained European

contracts after the Olympics.

It's all about being seen on the world stage but today it's definitely easier to find an overseas club when you have a good manager.

It would've been great to try my luck in professional football, because the financial rewards aren't available in Australia but it's a bit late for me now.

R.S. For many seasons spectators came to watch Matt Horsley make those dashing runs down the right flank but it appears you occupy a fairly disciplined midfield role today. Why has there been such a marked change in your responsibilities?

M.H. When I first played NSL under Dave Ratcliffe we used to run teams into the ground physically and tackle like there was no tomorrow. A player with my speed was used to get behind defences as often as possible so we could score early goals and not give the opponent a chance to get back into the game.

Since those early years, Wollongong has played a more systematic game under Nick Theodorakopoulos where we play a lot of two-touch football, and there's more emphasis on building your attacks more patiently rather than running opponents into the ground.

The other factor is we have players like Chipperfield, Masi, Ceccoli and Young who break very quickly on the counter-attack so there isn't the need for the side to rely so much on my attacking runs as in previous seasons.

R.S. Your round nine match against Marconi was generally recognised as one of the poorest matches this season. Are the paying public being cheated when players are stifled in matches like this, producing so little entertainment value?

M.H. The game certainly didn't receive rave reviews as neither team was

able to put it together on the day. When you look at a player like Vlado Zoric who under Manfred Schaefer was given a free role three years ago at Marconi, the public has a right to ask why they're not being entertained.

What we require in the NSL are matches where two quality teams are prepared to attack each other and allow skilled players to take defenders on without the emphasis on releasing early balls and the worry of losing possession.

R.S. Do you think the standard of the national league has deteriorated in recent years?

M.H. With the player drain, standards have dropped in some clubs but as for Wollongong our recent form suggests we now have a very strong squad which has the ability to challenge for honours this season.

We now have an 18-man squad to choose from, unlike previous years when we had at best fourteen quality first team players.

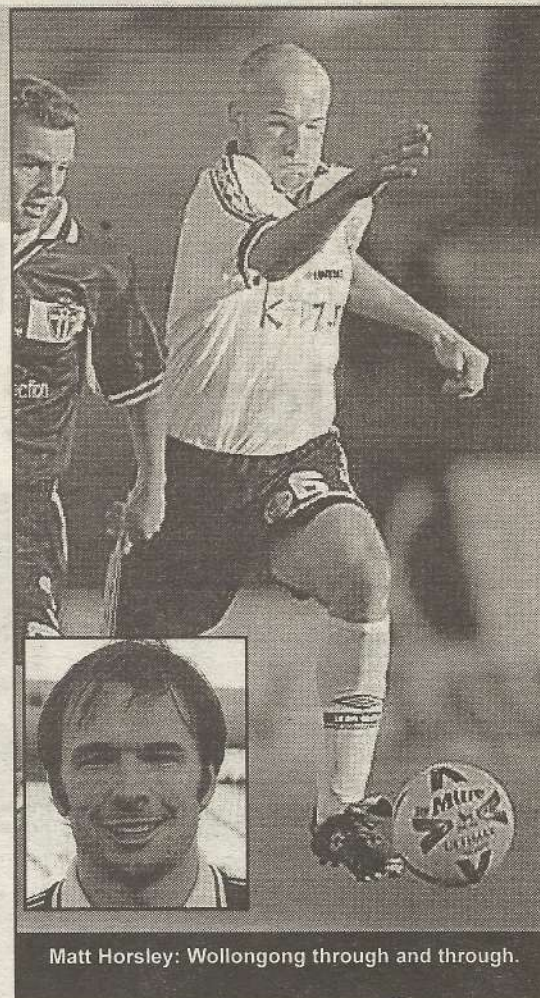
Our current team has every chance of emulating the 1997/98 side, particularly that we now have a great replacement for Tony Perinich in goalscorer Stuart Young.

If every club could boast eighteen man strong squads, the standard of the N.S.L. would be in good shape and people would not think twice about following the game.

R.S. Your work as a Development Officer for the Wolves has made you a very popular figure on the south coast. Can the glory days return to the region for your many fans?

M.H. I believe the club is taking many positive steps in promotion. This year we sent out approximately 5,000 match day passes to juniors, accompanied by a personalised letter from me and the reaction was tremendous because we're showing the kids we want to include them in everything the club does.

At the same time we need to make heroes of players like Paul Reid, Scott Chipperfield and Noel Spencer as people know me pretty well now.



Matt Horsley: Wollongong through and through.

If you study the success of Jim Kelly's team the thing that stands out is they built their success on the park so if we can continue our present run anything is possible.

R.S. What is that special feeling you have as a Wollongong player?

M.H. From an early age, my main ambition was to play for the Wolves and this same feeling is now prevalent in all our junior teams.

Many of the senior players now live in the district and there is a sense of pride in the club shared by the players in wanting to succeed for the south coast.

This is something which cannot be experienced by players who represent clubs which don't symbolize a district base.

Next week Aidan Ormond
meets new Wolves star
STUART YOUNG

Ram

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AUSSIES on the world stage

A round-up of how our Aussies players fared abroad this last week ...

Scottish-based Aussies set to 'retire'?

Craig Moore, Tony Vidmar and Mark Viduka are set to possibly 'retire' from international football to draft-dodge Australia's friendly matches in February and remain key figures in their respective Glasgow clubs' title aspirations.

According to stories circulating in Scotland Rangers' defenders Moore and Vidmar(right) will tell national coach Frank Farina that they want to be left out of his country's three games shortly after the SPL resumes - whatever the consequences.

Moore has heard loud and clear the message from Dick Advocaat that those who pay his wages are demanding his loyalty, whatever the morality of avoiding patriot games.

And Celtic striker Viduka is of a similar mind, despite the threat of FIFA suspensions for club matches.

But a FIFA spokesman revealed that Viduka, Moore and Vidmar may have to give up international football if they are named in squads by Farina and decide to decline.

However, the facts are that the players based in Scotland would miss one-match by participating in the Chile tournament - on 12 February.

The tournament is held between 9 and 15 February. The players have been sought for 7-16 February (or 6-16 including flight times).

Their next scheduled game on their return is 23 February.

Leeds United winger Harry Kewell missed one Premiership match in November after refusing to travel for Australia's two-match series with Brazil but, unless peace breaks out, Moore, Viduka and Vidmar could be banned for four or five club games, including the Old Firm meeting on February 23.

"If a player is summoned to a squad



Mark Viduka: could the V-bomber retire?

gathering for a friendly then the national association has the right to the player for 48 hours before the game and is given 48 hours to return thereafter," said a FIFA spokesman.

"But if they do not adhere to the summons then a ban can be effected in the five days after the friendly.

"Clearly, it is a delicate situation and the only option open to the players if they really don't want to go and want to play for their clubs is for them to write a letter to Soccer Australia to effectively retire from international football.

"This could be revoked at a later date but we would prefer to see agreement reached."

THE RAIN IN SPAIN ...

By Aidan Ormond

Melbourne Knights midfielder Zeljko Susa recently spent nine days in Spain - before the flooding hit Europe - training with Primera Liga side Alaves. The player is confident that a deal will go through at some point between the clubs, but for the moment he is back playing in Melbourne.

Susa (right) takes up the story of his brief Spanish experience.

"The time in Spain was great. I stayed in Victoria it was a nice place but I really didn't get a chance to prove myself. It was just to see what they were buying. I trained with them (Alaves) three times and played one game, against the reserves, in the snow. We won 5-0 and I scored. I had never seen snow, let alone played in it.

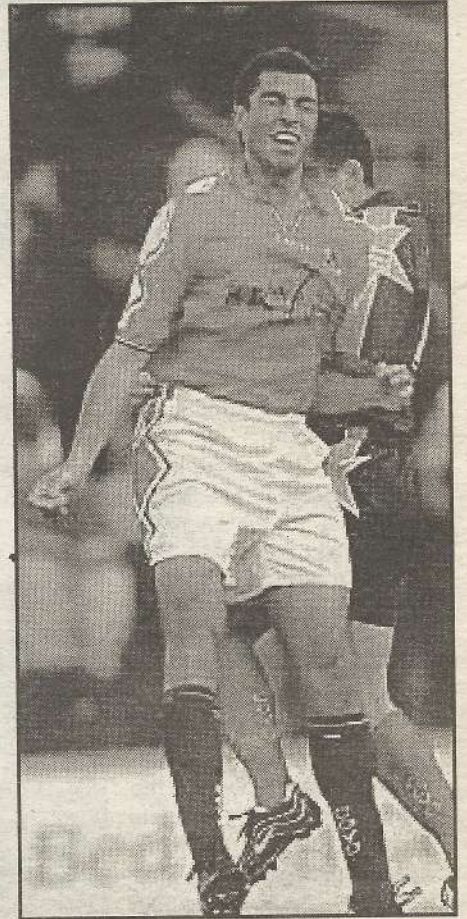
"I was there for about nine days. Alaves is not a big club - they have just been promoted to the first division, but the day I left, Real Madrid was checking in for the game the next day. It's a pity I was leaving.

"Basically both of us, that is the club and I, wanted to see how things would go, but I wanted to return to spend Christmas here.

"Their officials will be out later in the month to see me and how I'm going.

"I'd love to go back to Spain. Training was a lot more laid back than I expected. It was mainly skill work which I quite enjoyed. Yeah I enjoyed the trip and it opened up my mind to the fact that the players overseas are not that much better than local players.

"With the language it was a bit of a problem but there was a player who spoke English and one who spoke Croatian."



Robbie Slater, in his book *The Hard Way*, wrote about the difficulties of new players coming into a squad and possibly taking the spot, and livelihood, of an existing player. Susa's experiences were slightly different.

"Actually, surprisingly they were quite friendly given that you are there to take someone's position."

He will play with the Knights until a deal is sorted out by the clubs and agents.

SUMMARY

Our Aussies Abroad had little time for the Christmas festive season in the UK leagues. Unlike most of the Continental leagues - who take a winter break - the likes of Harry Kewell donned their gear and carried on barely able to notice the passing of the last Yuletide of the century.

In games played in the break between Christmas and the New Year, Kewell's Leeds United suffered their first loss in many weeks as they went down 2-0 away to Arsenal.

In front of just over 38,000 people Kewell, who played the full game, had one of his more quiet games and received a yellow card as the young guns of Leeds met their match.

Richard Johnson's Watford had a change of fortune with its first win since mid-September when it beat fellow strugglers Southampton 3-2.

Johnson played a full game in his team's win which kept them in the same

position, second last, but only a win away from fourth last Bradford.

Mark Bosnich was in goals for champions Manchester United in their last game before their sojourn to Brazil when they drew 2-2 away to fourth-placed Sunderland.

In the Nationwide Division One games played after Christmas a number of Aussies had reasons to celebrate as their teams recorded victories.

Danny Tiatto's Manchester City, most notably, had a 2-1 home win over Grimsby, propelling them to a four point lead over their nearest challengers. Tiatto was replaced in the 55th minute as his team achieved victory with a last minute goal.

Wolverhampton pulled itself within the play-off positions with a 1-0 home win over Norwich - after this win they were five points off Stockport who lie in sixth spot. Kevin Muscat played a full game while Steve Corica stayed on the bench.

In a 1-1 draw between Bolton and West Brom Jason Van Blerk played a full game but wouldn't have been in the best

of moods after being 'strongly disciplined' by team management after an incident in the tunnel in the recent game against Ipswich.

Crystal Palace had a 3-2 home win over Walsall but neither Craig Foster nor Nick Rizzo took part in the game with Rizzo remaining on the bench while Foster was out injured.

Crewe Alexander's run of success finally ended when they were beaten 1-0 away to Queens Park Rangers. Jason Kearton was in goals for Crewe, who have dragged themselves away from the bottom but not out of danger, as they remain in sixth last spot only four points above the relegation zone.

Another team whose fortune has turned around recently is Sheffield United. They had another win - this time a 2-0 home victory over Fulham.

WA's Shaun Murphy played his part in the win by plugging the defensive hole from his stopper's role.

No such luck story for Swindon Town for whom Frank Talia kept goal in a 3-1 away win to Tranmere - Swindon is

anchored at the foot of the table.

In the Nationwide Division Two Millwall got back on track after last week's loss with a 3-2 home win over Brentford. The win, featuring Tim Cahill, kept them in fourth spot but only two points away from third placed Bristol Rovers. Cahill was replaced in the 83rd minute while Lucas Neill was absent through injury.

In the Scottish League, the last round before the winter break saw a full round played last week. The 'old firm' derby between Celtic and Rangers produced a stalemate 1-1 result with the in form Mark Viduka scoring Celtic's goal, while both Craig Moore and Tony Vidmar played full games in the blue shirts of the 'Gers.

Viduka, who is the leading goalscorer in the Scottish Premier League, had a fabulous first half, hitting the post before opening the scoring in the 18th minute (see story Page 26).

Viduka has now scored 17 goals in his Celtic Premier League appearances this season

INSIDE SOCCER'S NSL ALL-STARS DECEMBER 1999

SQUAD MEMBERS

Gabriel Mendez (Sydney Olympic)
Christian Care (Marconi)
Dean Fak (Falcons)
Glenn Moore (Breakers)
Marcus Stergiopoulos (Football Kingz)
Ivan Vicelich (Football Kingz)
John Markovski (Carlton)
Tommy Pondeljak (Sydney United)
Andrew Crews (Parra Power)
Michael Curcija (South Melb)
Gareth Naven (Glory)
Stuart Young (Wolves)



1: John Perosh
Northern Spirit



5: Jack Sobczyk
Northern Spirit



4: Milan Blagojevic
Parramatta Power



3: Dave Cervinski
Wollongong Wolves



7: Marcus Phillips
Sydney Olympic



6: Steve Panopoulos
South Melbourne



2: Con Boutsianis
Perth Glory



8: John Buonavoglia
Newcastle Breakers



10: Brian MacNicol
Gippsland Falcons



9: Saso Petrovski
Wollongong Wolves



11: Scott Chipperfield
Wollongong Wolves

The IS Selectors explain their side

Inside Soccer's selectors fronted a packed (!) media conference to explain their 3-4-3 system that promises to play 'sexy football'!

JOHN PEROSH (keeper): You have to be good to keep Paul Henderson out of the Spirit side, and he is. Perosh is one of the few stars of a side that again struggled in December.

MILAN BLAGOJEVIC (libero): Simply one of the best players going around, and was part of arguably the greatest ever Australian team: Olyroos '92.

JACK SOBCZYK (central defence): Another one of the young Spirits who have shown up some of the more well-known players at Spirit Park. Has taken his chance with both hands. Is he any relation to Henjek Sobczyk, the 1986 NSW Rothmans Medal winner?

DAVE CERVINSKI (central defence): The general consensus is that he is one of the main reasons for Wolves' rise to the top six. The former Carlton, Knights and S-league player

would not be out of place at national level.

MARCUS PHILLIPS (midfield): Combative midfielder at Olympic who adds another dimension to his side's middle third - loves the physical stuff but has enough skill to get by.

STEVE PANOPOULOS (deep-lying midfielder): One of a number of quiet achievers at the champions. 'Pana' has popped up regularly in the IS 'best players' match stats. By the time you read this he will be preparing for Vasco da Gama in Brazil.

CON BOUTSIANIS (midfield): Just keeps on scoring and playing well for Glory. C7's Greg Blake says he is good enough for the national team - we agree. Brilliant at dead-balls.

SCOTT CHIPPERFIELD (wide left): In the rejuvenated Wolves selection he has returned to the form that got him picked in the, albeit ill-fated, Socceroos Oceania Nations Cup campaign of 1998. Loves to run at defenders and scores his fair share to boot. The left side of the all-stars has a Wolves feel, which should

work nicely.

BRIAN MACNICOL (striker): Just edged out Damian Mori. Is one of the league's most unsung players, but he has given coach Hopkins the ideal Christmas present: a striker that can score at Falcons.

SASO PETROVSKI (striker): A stunning headed goal against Strikers wrapped up a great month for the former Parra Eagle. He is proof yet again that there are state league players good enough to make the step up. Playing with Stuart Young - a player he only just edged out of the starting eleven - has helped him enormously.

JOHN BUONAVOGLIA (striker): What can you say about this 'pocket rocket'. He is a cool finisher, can sniff out chances and uses his height (or lack thereof!) to great advantage against bigger defenders. His partnership with Andy Harper is one of the most 'natural' in the league. The question is: can the Breakers hold on to him when his contract expires at the end of this season?

THE COACHES



Branko Culina
Sydney Olympic



Lee Sterrey
Newcastle Breakers

December was the month Sydney Olympic stood up and said 'we are good enough to go all the way' - and they did it with some Culinaesque élan.

It's been a tough tenure at Olympic for Branko Culina - by his own admission he could have been sacked after the first year, which is par for the course at Olympic - but owner Nick Politis had faith and that is faith is now bearing fruit.

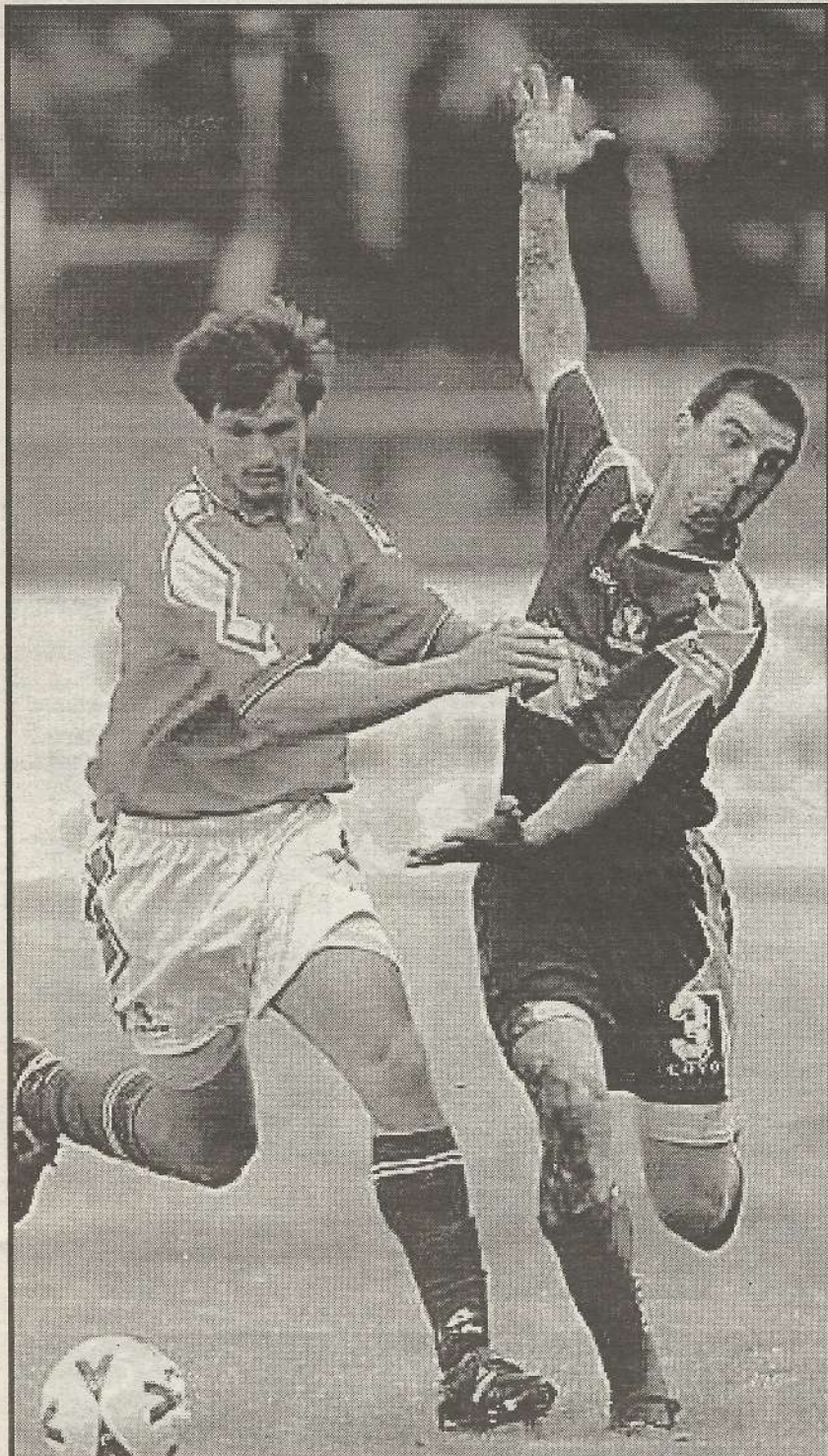
Their final game of the month - away to Power - confirmed their quality with a come-from-behind 1-2 win executed without three name stars.

Sitting in the six after a run of five games unbeaten (four wins and a draw) is Newcastle Breakers.

Coach Lee Sterrey - Culina's assistant this month - has been lauded for his down-to-earth manner, but few realise just how tactically astute he is.

Sterrey is a keen student of the game while possessing the inspirational qualities needed to bring out the best, in his own words, of not the most individually talented squad in the NSL.

Ivan, the catch was this big mate!



Pic of the week is surely big Falcons defender Manny Gotis pictured with Ivan Kelic during the Falcons' 1-0 away win. How big was the one that got away Manny?

NSL Round 15 PREVIEW

This Friday night sees two top quality games; one a Sydney derby and the other a top six clash.

In Newcastle they can expect 8-9,000 (weather permitting) for the visit of the league leaders to equal sixth spot Newcastle Breakers.

Lee Sterrey's men have made it seven games unbeaten after their 1-0 win over Sydney United last Sunday.

It's no coincidence that the Breakers' upsurge in form has coincided with the arrival of defender Glenn Moore.

Moore, who has taken a central defensive role, has forced skipper Shane Pryce to play wider on the right, yet the captain is too concerned with the team to be worried about playing out of position.

As Pryce said to Inside Soccer recently, he doesn't care where he plays as long it's best for the team.

Having said that, Newcastle don't have a mortgage on spirit; their opponents Sydney Olympic have that in spades this season - in contrast to last year's squad according to Branko Culina.

It's that team ethos and depth that saw them defeat Power with ten men for the final twenty minutes of their recent away league game, and it's something the side's coach Branko Culina is keen to foster.

As he said recently to this paper: "We do everything ourselves, I have no assistant, we train on different grounds each week, the players get changed in their cars, but it makes us strong."

This will be an absorbing contest. The only factor that may play into Newcastle's favour is that Olympic played a tough game against Glory on the Monday, giving them less time to recover than the home side, who had an easier task in taking on bottom side Sydney United.

If you've never been to Newcastle's compact home ground, this would be an ideal opportunity to do so.

On the same night Spirit of a different kind plays: Northern Spirit entertains Sydney United.

My how things have changed. Last season United's visit drew a crowd of over 16,000, and what a game it was, with Joel Griffiths stealing a late winner in a quality encounter that ended 2-1 to the visitors.

These days Spirit Park is a shadow of its former self. Writ large have been the goalscoring problems of last season, but at least they were winning back then.



Power's striker Jon Angelucci (white shirt): The Marconi v Power game this weekend is off.

Their fans, together with Glory, are still the most avid in the league but the side has badly let them down, despite an at times relatively encouraging performance against Brisbane.

Under-fire coach Graham Arnold has vowed to make more changes in an effort to find the right balance. Sadly injuries will hamper him, with the resurgent Ian Crook out, as well as dangerous left-sided player Matt Langdon and Robbie Enes both long-term casualties.

"I just don't know what happens to them (Spirit) when they play here at North Sydney Oval," said a frustrated Arnold in a press statement.

Sydney United too are a shadow of their former self, largely due to the movements of nearly their entire first team squad to pastures greener (although that hasn't quite panned out either!)

Sitting on the bottom of the league, the side will probably miss Eddie Bosnar (Olyroos) although Tommy Pondeljak is their real cause for optimism.

He surely is destined for bigger things in the future, either here or overseas.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	GD	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A
SYDNEY OLYMPIC	13	9	2	2	23	10	29	13	3	2	1	10	6	6	0	1	13	4
Wollongong Wolves	15	7	5	3	29	22	26	7	5	0	2	15	10	2	5	1	14	12
Carlton	13	7	4	2	26	13	25	13	4	2	1	14	7	3	2	1	12	6
Brisbane Strikers	14	7	4	3	21	13	25	8	3	3	1	14	8	4	1	2	7	5
Perth Glory	13	7	3	3	27	16	24	11	4	2	1	18	9	3	1	2	9	7
Newcastle Breakers	14	6	5	3	19	17	23	2	3	3	1	12	10	3	2	2	7	7
Marconi Stallions	14	7	2	5	19	18	23	1	4	0	2	7	7	3	2	3	12	11
South Melbourne	14	5	3	6	22	21	18	1	4	2	1	16	7	1	1	5	6	14
Gippsland Falcons	14	4	5	5	10	14	17	-4	2	2	3	5	6	2	3	2	5	8
Football Kingz	13	4	4	5	22	25	16	-3	1	3	2	10	14	3	1	3	12	11
Northern Spirit	14	5	1	8	12	21	16	-9	2	0	4	4	10	3	1	4	8	11
Parramatta Power	14	4	3	7	23	26	15	-3	2	3	3	11	11	2	0	4	12	15
Adelaide Force	14	3	5	6	14	17	14	-3	2	2	2	8	7	1	3	4	6	10
Melbourne Knights	14	4	1	9	14	27	13	-13	3	0	4	6	7	1	1	5	8	20
Canberra Cosmos	13	3	2	8	16	25	11	-9	2	1	5	10	11	1	1	3	6	14
Sydney United	14	2	3	9	8	20	9	-12	2	1	5	5	10	0	2	4	3	10

Produced with the assistance of McRopod Concept Sports Systems - www.planet.net.au/~mcropod.

Note: Excludes Monday January 3 games between Olympic and Glory and Kingz and Cosmos. Further, Wolves have played an extra game and the South Melbourne v Carlton game will now be played on Wed March 1 at 7.30pm

NSL TOP SCORERS:

(not including Monday night games)

PAUL FOSTER (Strikers) 9 goals

ALEX MOREIRA (Carlton) 9 goals



MICHAEL CURCIJA (SM)	8
SASO PETROVSKI	8
JOHN BUONAVOGLIA (NB)	7
JOEL GRIFFITHS (PP)	7
CON BOUTSIANIS (PG)	7
ESALA MASI (WC)	7
DAMIAN MORI (AC)	7

Breakers continue bid for first semi-final spot



NEWCASTLE BREAKERS 1 Moore 2 SYDNEY UNITED 0

Sunday night at Breakers Stadium, Newcastle. Crowd: 6,816.



Man of the Match - Eddy Bosnar

By Chris Dunkerley

After all the inclement weather - at last a sunny Sunday afternoon and now in Round 14 at the Breakers Stadium there were a few questions to be answered. For instance, could Newcastle coach Lee Sterrey's self-styled 'Magna V6' stay on the dry road out of the NSL lowlands and go onto a top six spot by giving the Breakers fans a third win at home?

For United's Dave Ratcliffe and his journeymen and threadbare Sydney United squad, a drop into the mire and a fall away from the bottom of table was looming unless the run of losses could be stopped.

Many in the crowd had tentative feelings before the match and Lee Sterrey shared them. He was reported as saying "even though they have struggled lately they have played better football than their position indicates. They are a good side and don't deserve to be on the bottom of the table. It's very much a danger game. They are looking for points to try to stay in the League next year".

And he added: "They're never going to be an easy side to beat - I can never remember in the last 10 years that they were an easy side to beat!"

Still for those of that persuasion the omens were favourable, fine weather at last, a win 1-0 in the Youth League, and a great crowd of 6,816 (the best crowd for many seasons).

Sydney United came without the 'ever-present' captain Velimir Kupresak but still started with a 5-3-2 formation against the Breakers' standard 4-2-2.

As well as rookie keeper Steven Tolios the man with the big job was sweeper (and ex Breaker and new Olyroo) Eddy Bosnar.

A midfield containing Aytec Genc and Tom Pondeljak is to be feared and the loss through injury for Newcastle of Greg Owens (still playing himself back in the youth league) and Brad Wiczorek (who has been in great form over the past month) could have proved crucial.

The pluses for the Breakers were the recent scoring form of Harper and Buonavoglia and the solid defensive record since Glenn Moore's inclusion.

The answers, when they came, weren't all that clear cut with Newcastle running out 1-0 winners after a lacklustre performance in the middle and in front of the goal, and with Sydney United playing some nice possession football but being

just as ineffective in the end.

The Breakers took the game to Sydney United from the whistle and forcing an early corner on the left the ball fell into a mass of players in the box.

As it invitingly bobbled from the ensuing skirmish Glenn Moore got a foot to it to force it over the line for a second minute.

Sydney United had to come at Newcastle but in the first 25mins they only got within range twice. Even those opportunities were wasted with one weak strike picked up easily by Bob Catlin and Nick Bosevski skying one over from long range without pressure.

They were nearly caught out when Newcastle captain Shane Pryce twice got forward on the right, but firstly blasted a similarly unforced shot over from long range, and then in a better move his pin point cross found Harper on the edge of the area. Harper's free header was not far over the bar but was an indicator that perhaps the sharpness wasn't there.

Sydney United gradually started to use the extra men at the back from the formation mis-match and play opened up a little; with Bosnar coming up and Pondeljak and Genc using their mobility to slip their markers and tear holes in the Newcastle midfield.

At the 30th min acting captain Aytec Genc got forward on the right and his curling head high cross was perhaps fortunately cleared by Pryce off the back of his head and out of danger.

Shortly after Catlin was forced to stretch to his left for a well hit but long range ground shot from Bosnar.

Whilst Sydney United were moving the ball around well their aggressive attempts at closing down were quite clumsy and Andy Harper especially was getting disturbed by the attention and lack of intervention by referee Dwight.

It was ironic then that, in what at first appeared a 50/50 race for the ball with Sydney United keeper Steven Tolios, he showed too many studs, collecting Tolios and earning the first yellow card.

For a while it looked like the keeper couldn't continue but fortunately after treatment he was able to contribute solidly to his team's defence.

Buonavoglia was also a target and he was crudely brought down just outside the box but no card or any other joy ensued to the Breakers as Wilson hit the free kick wide.

The big crowd was still in holiday mood and were surprisingly forgiving of the flat nature of the first half. Newcastle came out with a bit more fire but a series of attacking moves broke down.

Tolios was forced into a great reflex save at point blank range of Harper, who though in the process of going to ground was still able to get a boot to a cross from the right.

At the other end danger man Tom Pondeljak's long range shooting power was generally well shackled during the match but he had an opportunity at the 57 min when he hit a vicious free kick from way out which forced Catlin to parry; however the ball was quickly put out of danger by the defence. At the other end new Olyroo Bosnar was well in charge for long periods as he swept and then got forward seemingly all in one gliding motion.

United's smooth flowing midfield play

forced Sterrey to swap Tancheski for Trpceviski and gradually the Breakers were able to move into range. The score may have been doubled however soon after if Andy Roberts surging run from his own half had ended with any ideas of what to do when he got there.

Mark Wison got forward to hit a powerful close range shot but Kain Rastall's body intervened to concede a corner. Within minutes Wilson was again forward but was only able to lob to the keeper from a sweet pass from Trpceviski.

The game continued with United dominating general play and possession but Newcastle forcing turnovers and counter attacking. It is hard to remember any clear chances for United as Catlin just kept plucking long range attempts out of the air all night, especially from Bosnar.

Just as the crowd was settling for the points in stoppage time the game came alive with the Breakers hitting the upright three times with the keeper beaten; Buonavoglia the main culprit. In the best chance Wison sent the ball through to Sprod who placed the cross from the left away from the keeper and to Buonavoglia who slammed the ball onto the right post, rebounding to Pryce at the edge of the area whose volley passed just a metre over.

It is doubtful whether either team was happy with the game. Certainly the loss of points anchors United dangerously on the bottom of the table. Coach Dave Ratcliffe was suprisingly upbeat and pointed to how close many of his games had been against top sides and his teams ability to play.

Certainly his astute tactics came close to upstaging Sterrey's but the coach can only do so much. Being a realist he readily admitted however that he didn't have any answer to the bare fact - United can't score! "I had nobody to bring off the bench to solve the problem today" he said.

Ratcliffe will have to solve that very problem and very soon if his otherwise



MATCH STATS:

NEWCASTLE BREAKERS:
B Catlin, S Pryce (c), G Moore, A Roberts, T McManus, G Sprod, T Dodd (D Smith 77), M Wilson, C Tancheski (V Trpceviski 56), J Buonavoglia, A Harper (L Tomich 86).



SYDNEY UNITED:

S Tolios, E Bosnar, V Savoca, N Arrarte, T Pondeljak, T Maric, K Rastall, A Genc (c), J Moric, N Bosevski (A Deak 71), C Luff.
Subs not used: M Jurilj, S

Bozinovski.

Yellows:

Newcastle: Harper 37, Trpceviski 67
Sydney United: Bosnar 33

Best Players:

3. Eddy Bosnar (Sydney United)
2. Glenn Moore (Newcastle Breakers)
1. Glenn Sprod (Newcastle Breakers)

Referee: David Dwight

competitive side isn't to sink into that quicksand that sucks bottom teams down.

Lee Sterrey, asked if he was happy with the game, stated in his usual candid manner, "football wise it was garbage. In enthusiasm and intensity we were terrible - a very ordinary performance. I apologise to the supporters".

"It was a clone of the Kingz game. Thank God for the first minutes, we got the goal and then at least were solid defensively".

He added, "just talking to the players, they felt flat, Harps said he felt flat, Johnny wasn't as sharp up front, and there was no clear reason."

Looking for positives for each team? Sydney United were well served by Bosnar, keeper Tolios, Pondeljak and Genc, and lesser known players like Savoca, Rastall, and Bosevski. For the Breakers Moore, Sprod, Roberts, and McManus were good value for fans.

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Falcons force draw against Adelaide



GIPPSLAND FALCONS 1

Hutchinson 50

ADELAIDE FORCE 1

Pelosi 16

Sunday night at Falcons Stadium, Gippsland. Crowd 2,398.



MacNicol

MATCH STATS:

Gippsland Falcons:

Jevdjovic - Fak - Gotis -
Durakovic - Marcina -
Vargas - Bell -
Hutchinson - Kakos
(Mandic 68min) - Nilo -



Adelaide Force:

Knezevic - Tobin -
Costanzo - Veart - Kim -
Talladira (Kemp 75min) -
Sabljak - Hassell -
Vidmar - Mori (Brain
71min) - Pelosi

Yellows:

Force: Mori 30, Tobin 41, Pelosi 52

Best Players:

3 DURAKOVIC
(GIPPSLAND FALCONS)
2 Sabljak (Adelaide Force)
1 Costanzo (Adelaide Force)

Referee: Brett Hugo



Force's Claudio Pelosi

By Lucio Viggiano

In blustery conditions at Mobil Park, the Falcons and Adelaide Force took the field for the first time in the new millennium looking to consolidate on recent good form shown by both sides.

Having won their last two matches, Adelaide were growing in confidence and looking to put a disappointing 1999 behind them. The Falcons on the other hand, after an impressive victory away at the Knights were keen to continue their push up the ladder which has seen them become a realistic contender for a finals berth.

The match began with the experienced Adelaide team taking control and dictating the pace of the game from the outset.

The Adelaide players were closing down and chasing hard, giving the Falcons players no time on the ball and no



Another solid defensive display by the heir apparent to Milan Ivanovic: Angelo Costanzo.

opportunity to settle into any pattern of play.

The early midfield dominance by Talladira, Sabljak and Hassell led to the first real chance of the match in the 8th minute.

Great link up play by Hassell and Sabljak lead to a teasing cross that flashed across the Falcons goal only to see Mori slide in only centimetres short at the far post with the Falcons keeper and defenders caught ball watching.

This early dominance by Adelaide lead to the first goal of the match in the 16th minute. A free kick, some 15 metres outside the box, was played wide to an unmarked Costanzo when all the Falcons players were expecting a shot.

Costanzo proceeded to deliver a perfect cross into the six-yard box to an unmarked Pelosi to head a simple goal while Jevdjovic in the Falcons goal remained flat-footed.

Adelaide continued to dominate play with the Falcons unable to string any moves together due to the midfield pressure being applied by the Force. The defensive combination of Tobin, Costanzo, Veart and Kim were well on top with the Falcons attack of Nilo, Kakos and MacNicol unsighted.

The Falcons slowly began to get back into the game through their determined captain Durakovic. His presence at the back was keeping the Falcons in the game and his courageous play was bringing his teammates into the match.

The Falcons almost levelled the score in the 25 minute after a great run and cross by Hutchinson after a half-cleared corner. The cross found MacNicol who finished well on the volley only to be adjudged offside.

The Falcons, through Vargas and Bell in midfield, started having more of the play, with the Adelaide players happy to sit back on their lead and try to catch the Falcons on the break.

And they almost did in the 31 minute when a quick break by Pelosi found Mori who managed to beat his man, only to be well tackled by Fak in the last line of defence.

Adelaide lifted the tempo of the game towards the end of the half with both Vidmar and Pelosi coming close with headers from inside the six-yard box.

The best chance fell to Pelosi in the 43 minute when his header was cleared off the line by Vargas after a well taken corner yet again found an Adelaide player unmarked in the six yard box.

The second half began in total contrast to the first with the Falcons players well on top and in control of the midfield.

Jeff Hopkins had obviously got the message through to his players during the half time break and they responded with a magnificent goal in the 50 minute.

A foul on Nilo just outside the box saw Hutchinson curl a perfect left foot shot around the Adelaide wall into the bottom left corner of the goal with Knezevic unsighted and unable to make ground.

The game opened up after the equaliser with play flowing from end to end and chances falling to both sides. Mori made a great run in the 55 minute, beating several defenders and cutting the ball back from the goal line almost causing an own goal as the Falcons defence got in each others way.

In the 58th minute a great ball by Nilo put Kakos behind the Adelaide defence. This caused confusion at the back after Kakos was thwarted left Knezevic stranded off his line and a clever Vargas chip was well saved by the keeper.

Falcons were having the better of play after their equaliser, however they could not penetrate the well marshalled Adelaide defence.

Long range shots by Gotis and Vargas went well wide and the introduction of Mandic for Kakos up forward for the Falcons had no impact.

As the Falcons tired, Adelaide came back into the match to dominate the last 10 minutes only to be thwarted by a desperate Falcons defence lead by Durakovic who put his body on the line time and time again.

Zoran Matic would not have believed what he saw in the 89th minute when a slice of luck for the Falcons kept Adelaide from stealing the three points.

A great run into space by Kim down the right lead to a perfect cross to Vidmar at the far post, his header beat a flat footed Jevdjovic in the Falcons goal only to rebound off the upright back into the keeper's arms.

The match was one of contrasting halves with Adelaide dominating the first half and the Falcons having the better of the second half. Both



Falcons' goalscorer John Hutchinson

sides showed enough to suggest they will be amongst those battling for finals placings later in the year.

The best player on the night was the Falcons captain Mehmet Durakovic. His courage kept the Falcons in the game and his leadership ensured the Falcons players never gave up the battle.

Nick Sabljak in midfield for Adelaide worked tirelessly and was behind many of their attacking moves. Angelo Costanzo, in the last line of defence for Adelaide, showed his composure and maturity in a solid display.

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Wolves' Masi devours a desperate Power

WOLLONGONG WOLVES 4

Masi 2, 10, 58, Chipperfield 56

PARRAMATTA POWER 3

Burns 7, Byrnes 16, Sterjovski 72

Sunday night at Brandon Park, Wollongong. Crowd 3,844.



MATCH STATS:



WOLLONGONG WOLVES:

Pogliacomini, Souris, Ceccoli, Stanton, Cervinski, Horsley, Chipperfield, Spencer (Surjan 80), Huxley (Harlock 78), Petrovski, Masi (Dimech 89)



PARRAMATTA POWER:

Crews, Barrett, Santalab (Angelucci 67), Eagleton, Burns, Sterjovski, Griffiths, Berry (Gibson 75), Blagojevic, Byrnes, Bennett.

Yellows:

Wolves: Petrovski 73, Spencer 76, Cervinski 85

Power: Berry 33, Bennett 52, Eagleton 84

Best Players:

3 - CERVINSKI (WOLLONGONG)
2 - Eagleton (Parramatta)
1 - Masi (Wollongong)

Referee: Eddie Lennie

By Stephen Webb

Wollongong Wolves' thrilling 4-3 win over Parramatta Power made them the New Year's first scorers and the league's highest scorers.

With what is becoming a trademark opening Wolves scored two minutes after the kick off.

But that was followed by a rush of goals from both sides - three more in the next 14 minutes - with the home side eventually unable to hold on to a 4-2 lead.

Poor defending and fine finishing (Scott Chipperfield's 56th minute header was a ripper) made for an exciting match (which had no end of people afterwards tritely claiming "football was the winner").

Parramatta coach David Mitchell's main complaint after the game was that his side scored three goals away and still didn't win.

With midfielder Paul Reid and regular front man Stuart Young out through suspension, Wollongong coach Nick Theodorakopoulos opted in favour of Fijian striker Esala Masi over ball player Antony Surjan. This changed Wolves' regular 3-4-1-2 formation to 3-4-3: more all-out assault power.

Masi, though his performance was not uniformly distinguished, vindicated his coach's decision by hitting a hat-trick.

The first goal came from an Alvin Ceccoli ball to Chipperfield down the left. Chipperfield ran into the box but unselfishly pushed it square to Masi running onto a sitter - which he thumped into the roof of the net.

Within four minutes first-time passing between David Cervinski, Matt Horsley and Noel Spencer almost put Masi

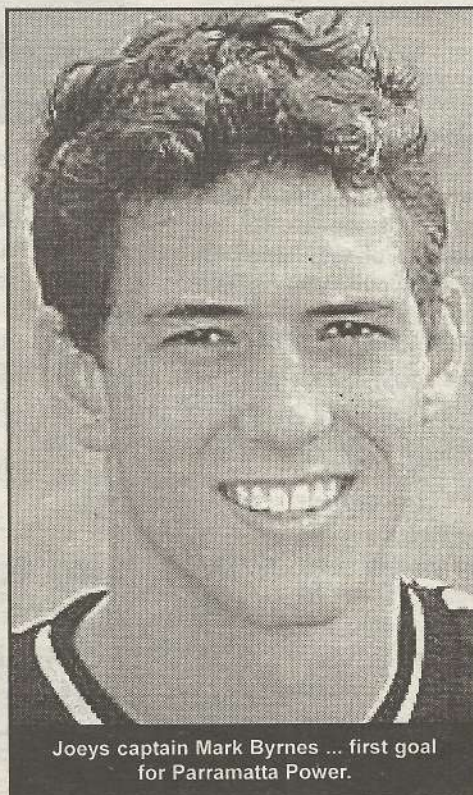
through again - but on this occasion, and on several afterwards, Masi was caught offside.

Minutes later it was a Parramatta combination - Bennett and Blagojevic - that put Burns through unmarked to level the score.

Wolves seemed to have the upper hand but it soon became apparent the three points wouldn't come easily.

Interesting tussles developed around the pitch: Blagojevic and Santalab rumbling Petrovski off the ball; Barrett keeping Masi at bay; Griffiths down Power's right flank often getting the better of Souris; Eagleton chasing, anticipating and intercepting Chipperfield and Ceccoli down Wolves' left side.

In the tenth minute Eagleton put the ball out for a corner under pressure from Chipperfield. Chipperfield's kick was met by Cervinski's head - a fine effort cleared off the line but only as far as Masi who secured his second goal of the evening.



Joeys captain Mark Byrnes ... first goal for Parramatta Power.

Wolves' jubilation was dampened by an injury to "captain courageous" Horsley. Horsley, who had shaved his head for the charity Camp Quality, headed the crossbar, inflicting a gash which later received ten stitches.

Wolves, playing with ten men, were still on the attack. Skilful work in midfield by Chipperfield and Petrovski got the ball to Huxley (playing his 50th NSL game for Wolves) who passed through to Masi with the Parramatta goal in his sights.

Masi drove hard and low ... but outside the left upright.

Horsley returned to the pitch with head bandaged when Huxley conceded a corner. Santalab dropped the ball onto Pogliacomini who could only punch it back into the air. When it came down again Byrnes was waiting to head in Power's second equaliser.

In the 24th minute Griffiths sent in a fierce long shot which Cervinski slid low to block.

A minute later Santalab put a long

ball down the left to Sterjovski who evaded Stanton and crossed to Griffiths. Griffiths niftily back-heeled around Souris but wide of goal.

Parramatta continued their attacks but Horsley caught Griffiths on Wolves' by-line and Cervinski robbed Sterjovski.

Then, on the half hour, it was Wolves' turn. Petrovski chased a high through ball into Parramatta's penalty area, somehow beating Blagojevic and Byrnes, but volleying high over the bar.

A minute later Blagojevic needed a good tackle to neutralise Masi who seemed to be heading off for his third goal - but with a player to beat and the ball at his feet couldn't decide what to do with it.

The first half ended with a flurry of activity; Ceccoli provided a fine ball down the left to Petrovski, Chipperfield beat two Parramatta defenders down Wolves' right, Horsley got hurt again chasing back down Wolves' left, Eagleton made an important tackle on Chipperfield, Berry got the better of Cervinski at a Wolves corner, and Cervinski putting his head to good use in defence.

The second half began with Chipperfield showing a lovely touch to beat Eagleton but Eagleton soon showing some skill in beating Petrovski. His efforts were rewarded with the ball eventually coming to Griffiths who crossed ... but only as far as Pogliacomini.

Five minutes into the second half Barrett got back in time to steal the ball off Petrovski's toes as he took it to Parramatta's goal box. The Wolves striker was left with only himself to kick ... for not shooting sooner.

Spencer soon hit the ball back in for Wolves but Cervinski could only manage to head it down to Power keeper Andrew Crews.

When the ball was cleared, Petrovski, chasing back, cleverly robbed Eagleton. But he promptly returned the ball to his foe who expressed his gratitude by running at the Wolves goal and shooting wide to the left.

The best goal of the game came in the 56th minute after Huxley in midfield spread the ball to Horsley on the right. The Wolves skipper masterfully held on to the ball until Chipperfield had made his run at goal. Chipperfield had to stretch for it but his header under the crossbar was the sort of class that may help the case for his inclusion in the national squad.

Although not as penetrative as in recent matches, Chipperfield still caused the Power defence much grief: all three of their yellow cards were for fouls against the Wolves speedster.

Parramatta were soon reeling from another blow. A long throw from Ceccoli found its way to Petrovski who shot against the right upright. Running onto the rebound was ... Esala Masi, bagging his third.

The home side, two goals up, started napping. Parramatta regrouped and the game became even more dramatic.

Eagleton hit a good header infield to Griffiths who had to be tackled by the tenacious Cervinski.

Then Chipperfield was goal-bound until Barrett wrapped him up.

In the 63rd minute Wolves failed to clear a sustained Parramatta attack. Blagojevic shot through the defenders' legs forcing Pogliacomini to save diving to his right.

From the clearance Masi won Wolves a corner, met by Horsley whose glancing header sailed past the left post.

Parramatta clawed back a goal in the



Esala Masi ... three goals for Wolves

72nd minute after a corner from the right. Cervinski mistimed a header, attempting to clear a shot on goal. His deflection took the ball out of Pogliacomini's reach and into the path of Sterjovski.

Pogliacomini needed a special effort to deny Parramatta the equaliser in the 85th minute. Cervinski fouled Griffiths outside the Wolves penalty area. Bennett's strike was pushed wide by a superb diving save from the Wollongong custodian.

A Wolves counter attack saw Masi break free on the right and cross to Surjan on the left. Surjan laid it back for Harlock who shot high.

With 88 minutes of regular time gone Griffiths shot wide left of Wolves' goal. Then Burns hit a finely angled cross past the face of goal. It eluded the defence ... and Sterjovski ... by a whisker. From the corner Eagleton shot high.

And the last gasp - from the crowd - came when an Eagleton cross from the right was courageously taken high by Pogliacomini running out off his line.

Theodorakopoulos said that, although he was disappointed at yet another wet home game, he thought it was a magnificent soccer match.

The Wolves coach said despite playing their fourth game in 13 days he had instructed his players to "go at 'em".

Mitchell said the two quick goals after half time "almost killed us ... but, having said that, we did very well".

Both coaches noted their team's defensive lapses.

Theodorakopoulos said he had been happy with Wolves' defence until the Parramatta game. "But we were just fortunate enough to have strikers on song. You'd go a long way to see a better goal than Chipperfield's."

He also complimented the visitors' efforts. He said he didn't know if, mathematically, Parramatta could make the finals but he said they would give "a hell of a shock" to other sides along the way.

Mitchell said he thought he had a quality team that would certainly go close to making the finals, especially with Steven Laybutt coming back.

Both teams have well-deserved rests next week: Power because three players have Olyroo duties; and Wolves because they've already played the next round's match against South Melbourne.

Spirit slides as Strikers head towards top



NORTHERN SPIRIT 0

BRISBANE STRIKERS 2

Stuart McLaren 19, Peter Grierson 29

Sunday night at North Sydney Oval, Sydney. Crowd 6,714.



MATCH STATS:

NORTHERN SPIRIT: J Perosh, I Crook (A Snyder 43), M Cunico, P Bilokapic, S Lyons (P Moss 81), L Casserly, M Bingley, T Cranney, R Slater, D Seal (R Griffiths 60), T Perinich.



BRISBANE STRIKERS: C Bolton, G Gwynne, S Stefanutto, A Davidson, B Ditton, S McLaren (C), J North, P Grierson, J Harris, (D Pilic 69), N Meredith, P Foster.

Yellows:

Northern Spirit: Michael Cunico 31
Brisbane Strikers: Paul Foster 71

Best Players:

3. Brad Ditton (Strikers)
2. Stuart McLaren (Strikers)
1. Shane Stefanutto (Strikers)

Referee: Gerry Connolly

unscathed and had to be replaced at the eleventh hour by Ryan Griffiths - who had already played a full game in the youth team - through to a crucial offside decision which brought Brisbane's second goal, inside the first half hour.

In addition, Ian Crook, sweeping and distributing with all his customary aplomb, succumbed to a pulled calf muscle just before half time and another reshuffle was needed in the Spirit line-up.

It all began quite brightly for Spirit, as has so often been the case in matches at North Sydney Oval this season, with passes being sprayed around attractively and a general feeling of optimism being passed on to the team's loyal and vocal supporters.

A failure to break down the well disciplined Brisbane Strikers defence, however, eventually led to the home side yet again conceding a first half goal to their opponents fairly early in the game, once more due to defensive error.

Spirit coach Graham Arnold was most disenchanted with his nominated defender responsible for guarding the far post, at the corner, from which the Brisbane side opened the scoring in the 19th minute.

While Arnold would not name the player, he did say that he received no satisfactory explanation for the man's move away from his sentry's position which allowed Brisbane skipper Stuart McLaren a free header 8 yards out which he bounced off the ground and past John Perosh, who was, rightly, controlling the near post.

The corner had been swept in from the left by Nicky Meredith after a period in which the visitors had begun to settle down well and win a series of free kicks and corners.

Spirit opened in the first 2 minutes with an excellent interchange of passes which showed considerable promise.

Robbie Slater was released on the right and fed a ball to David Seal who found Tony Perinich with a square pass. Perinich bore down on goal, but Clint Bolton raced off his line to make the Spirit player hurry his shot and the ball was safely claimed by the alert keeper.

Brisbane showed that they would be using the direct approach in attacking situations when, in the 7th minute, Jeremy Harris found himself chasing a long ball out of defence which required Perosh to come off his line and head clear, well outside his area, as Harris threatened to reach the speculative pass first.

Shane Lyons, on for Spirit in his full home debut, worked hard on the left, managing to get in a 13th minute shot which

skimmed along the sodden turf and reached Bolton at full stretch. This came just before Brisbane's first goal and there was not a lot more offered by Northern Spirit before Brisbane extended their lead on 29 minutes. It was a game of little inspiring football, once Brisbane had shot to a 2-0 lead inside the first half hour. The visitors were content to play within themselves from that point, but worked hard at containing Spirit, always being first to the ball when they could and generally hustling and bustling to ensure that Spirit could not string together any worthwhile passes or get any real rhythm going.

Brisbane's second goal came after a clearance out of the Spirit defence saw the ball headed back over the heads of the Spirit backline by Andrew Davidson, leaving Peter Grierson alone and behind the opposition players, but with the ball at his feet.

Somewhat bemused to be in this position, with the flag staying down and the whistle silent, Grierson took all the time in the world to beat Perosh from close range with a clinical finish. Spirit players appealed in vain for offside and had stopped playing, when Grierson dashed past them to seize his opportunity.

Many in the crowd and some on the Brisbane side were surprised to see the goal stand, but stand it did. All of the Spirit players were a dejected lot as they had seemed convinced that offside would be the officials' ruling.

The second half fell away somewhat as Spirit failed to make any impression upon a well organised Brisbane side which played well as a team, just as many past visiting sides to North Sydney Oval have done this season.

Paul Bilokapic sent a long range left footer wide in the 53rd minute and some good work by Ryan Griffiths on the left led to a piece of good defence by Davidson who turned away a smart cross by the Spirit youngster.

Casserly sent over a few corners from the right as the game moved into its final stages. One such flag kick required the defence to scramble the ball clear when weight of Spirit numbers looked certain to yield a goal.

At the other end Brisbane seemed content to make the most of rare counter attacking opportunities.

Substitute David Pilic struck one from long range which went narrowly past the post in the 78th and when Foster played Pilic in again in the 83rd it needed a sound tackle from Matthew Bingley to



Graham Arnold ... needs to find answers quickly



Peter Grierson ... scorer of the second Strikers goal.

By Paul Goodwin

The story of woe continued for Northern Spirit on Sunday at North Sydney Oval where the visiting Brisbane Strikers got their finals campaign back on track with a merciless 2-0 drubbing of the home side on a cool, drizzly and depressing evening for local supporters.

Nothing went right for Spirit, from the pre match warm-up when doubtful striker Abbas Saad failed to come through

snaffle out the real threat of a third goal.

The game petered out at the end as Spirit found there to be no way through an unrelenting and soundly built Brisbane defence.

Brisbane played the game to perfection, for an away team, making the most of their rare chances and playing to their full potential in all other areas on the day.

Brisbane coach John Kosmina merely urged his men, before the game, to 'have a go' following some lacklustre showings in recent matches and they did indeed show a lot of industry and competitiveness.

For Spirit coach Graham Arnold 'it was the same old story'. He was again feeling let down by his players who just did not match it with the opposition at the same level of intensity for 90 minutes.

The bright start and subsequent loss of initiative to the opposition, continues a pattern which has become established in most home games this season.

An inability to score early - or at all - and falling behind fairly early in the game to a soft goal by their opponents. These are the symptoms of the malaise, each time the side is beaten.

Winning coach John Kosmina may well have said that his side still has a lot of work to do, but for Graham Arnold's men, it is an awful lot of work.

Missing from the Spirit line-up were the injured Mark Rudan, Robbie Enes and Abbas Saad.

It is hard to see just where the coach will turn next after this showing.

'It is hard to see just where the (Spirit) coach will turn next after this showing.'

Marconi's Karl mauls Melbourne with clinical finish

MARCONI STALLIONS 3

Trajanovski 45, Karl 87, 90

MELBOURNE KNIGHTS 0

Sunday night at Marconi Stadium, Sydney. Crowd 4,136.



MATCH STATS:



Marconi Stallions:

Turnbull, Gibson, Farah, Smith, Renaud (M. Babic 65), Care, Maloney (Severino 86), McDonald, Zoric, Duric (Severino 90),

Trajanovski (Karl 85).



Melbourne Knights:

John, Kovacevic, Abbas (Vassallo 62), Rajher, Nasteviski, Magdic (Urlovic 73), Kiratzoglou, Silic, Susa (Reda 46), Cervinski,

Kelic.

Yellows:

Stallions: McDonald 55, Duric 76.

Knights: Magdic 72

Best Players:

3: MALONEY (STALLIONS)

2: Zoric (Stallions)

1: Trajanovski (Stallions)

Referee: Con Diomis

By John Vrtaric

Marconi created numerous chances against a hapless Melbourne Knights but it was only in the last three minutes that they secured a thoroughly deserved victory.

Substitute Harry Karl entered the fray late in the game and showed his teammates how it's done by clinically finishing off two opportunities, both created by captain Brad Maloney.

Ironically, the creator of the two goals was the main culprit in the first half as Maloney missed at least three clear scoring chances.

In a disappointing game marred by lack of basic skill the match was, though, lively and produced a lot of goal-mouth incidents.

With a number of injuries and suspensions, particular within its central defensive formation, Marconi adopted a 4-4-2 formation with Buddy Farah and Mike Smith as the twin stoppers flanked by Chad Gibson and Brendan Renaud.

Marconi coach Eddie Krncevic expressed satisfaction at the way the team has adapted to the new system over the last two weeks.

With the system supporting four midfielders Maloney was given extra room to make his attacking forays and he found plenty of space and time throughout the game.

In the first ten minutes the Knights defence leaked like a sieve as Marconi surged forward at will.

In the first minute a deep cross from the left found the head of an unmarked Maloney whose looping header was aimed just under the bar but was pushed over by the alert John.

From the resulting corner a header by Alex Duric bounced back to him off a Knights' defender and sat up well for his left foot. He lashed at the ball and pro-

duced a powerful shot which Knights' keeper Martin John did well to push around his right hand post.

Another two corners followed and the second produced another goal scoring chance for the Stallions. The corner from Marconi's left flank was headed by Smith but deflected back to fellow defender Farah who was about ten metres out and with a clear sight of goal. He hurried his shot and skewed it well wide of John's right post.

In the fifth minute a scare for Marconi as an innocuous back pass was cleared by young keeper Michael Turnbull straight into the chasing Adrian Cervinski but, fortunately for Turnbull, it rebounded off the attacker over the goal-line for a goal-kick.

Two minutes later Maloney had the first of his opportunities. Duric beat Nasteviski on the left and sent over a deep cross to the far post where an unmarked Maloney had the time and space to provide the first goal. Inexplicably Maloney failed to control the ball and it rolled out harmlessly for a goal kick.

In the next two minutes both Christian Care, from a headed clearance, and Darren McDonald, after a good move, had clear shots on goal but neither produced the right result. Care's firmly struck volley was aimed straight at John while McDonald's shot was well wide.

In the 12th minute the Knights produced their first clear chance - Smith lost the ball deep on Marconi's left defensive flank and Adrian Cervinski took the ball inside the Stallions' box. Waiting in the centre was the experienced Ivan Kelic - all Cervinski had to do was pull the ball back to him. The low cross was heading towards Kelic but Farah stuck out his foot and took the ball off the toes of Kelic.

Both defences had trouble keeping track of their attacking opponents and two minutes later Kelic had another chance. A deep cross from right wing-back found Kelic in between two Marconi defenders but his header sailed over the bar without troubling Turnbull.

Marconi was clearly dominant throughout the first half and produced a number of half-chances before they came very close from a corner in the 31st minute. The corner from the right came off the head of Duric on the near post but Knights' left wing-back Paul Magdic was well positioned to clear it off the line.

In the 35th minute Knights came close to opening the score - an Ante Kovacevic free kick, after a foul on Cervinski by Farah, sneaked through the wall and had the unsighted Turnbull going the wrong way. He was able to get down to the ground shot knocking it towards the goal, but was able to recover in time to stop from it from rolling over the line.

At the other end Duric again found Maloney speeding through the middle and all he had to do was control the ball and he would have been facing John one-on-one. But for the second time he failed to control the ball and the danger was averted.

Two minutes later Maloney was presented with chance number three. A Vlado Zoric ball over the top found the attacking midfielder just outside the penalty box. His control was, on this occasion, exemplary but his half-volley sailed wide and high.

In the 38th minute another Zoric ball over the top was, again, aimed at Maloney in the clear but his ball control again let him down and the Knights escaped without punishment.

In the 40th and 41st minute Kelic produced two chances for his striking partner Cervinski. In both cases Kelic found room on the right to provide crosses for Cervinski - the first he headed well over the bar and the second his low shot was aimed directly at Turnbull who saved with ease.

Finally in the first minute of injury time Marconi achieved its objective - a Maloney free kick from the right saw Duric jump with Kovacevic on the near post with 'keeper John behind the two unable to reach the ball. Duric outjumped the defence with his header aimed inside the near post. Nasteviski and Trajanovski dueled for the ball with the Marconi attacker winning out to push the ball over the line.

The second half produced less goal-mouth action but, again, a number of chances went begging.

The worst miss occurred in the 53rd minute when a Smith clearance from deep sailed over the Knights defence into the path of Care and Maloney who were both adjudged to be on-side despite protests from the visitors.

With no defenders in sight, the two Marconi players only had John to beat but Care, instead of squaring the ball to Maloney, went on his own striking his shot wide of John's right post.

After the game Krncevic said that he wasn't too disappointed with the bad miss although in different circumstances (read: anything but a win) he may well have had a different attitude.

Marconi continued to press forward with Maloney offered another chance in the 60th minute but he took too long to control a Duric cross and was robbed of the ball just inside the Knights' penalty box.

The arrival of Karl soon took the suspense out of the game as he scored Marconi's second goal and put the game out of the reach of the Melbourne visitors.



Harry Karl ... clinical goalscorer.

In the 87th minute a Smith pass to Karl on the left. The ex-Knights player took the ball deep inside the penalty box and from an acute angle rifled the ball past John inside the far post for a 2-0 lead.

Three minutes into stoppage time Karl had an even bigger smile. Maloney, who had a terrific second half, received the ball on Marconi's right flank and produced a sublime through ball to that man Karl. Picking up the ball just outside the box he cut inside the box past his opponent and from ten metres out with the outside of his right foot he swept the ball past John into the far corner.

Krncevic was happy with the performance of his team attributing the victory to a "good team performance."

"It could have been more but it was a well deserved win, it should have been finished by half time," Krncevic commented.

"It was good to see Mark Babic back and with Dominic Longo back next week we will have lots of competition for spots," he added.



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Zorbas' Greek Tragedy: scores then sent-off



PARRAMATTA POWER 1

Angelucci 43

SYDNEY OLYMPIC 2

Tome 57, Zorbas 71

Tuesday night at Parramatta Stadium, Sydney. Crowd 10,018

Round 13
game

MATCH STATS:



PARRAMATTA POWER: A Crews, D Barrett (C), J Vrkic, M Byrnes, S Eagleton, J Angelucci, J Burns, S Berry, W Ardone (S)

Berry 68) A Elrich (J Griffiths 75), P Bennett.



SYDNEY OLYMPIC: G Bouhoutsos, S Baillie, A Juric (C), C Zoricich, L Wilson, N Tome (C)

Kalantzis 75), M Phillips, P Cardozo, B Emerton, P Zorbas (sent off 71), N Carle (H Jomaa 46, S Sinozic 82).

Yellow:

Parramatta: Walter Ardone 24

Sydney Olympic: Peter Zorbas 9, 71, Chris Zoricich 32, Hussein Jomaa 66

Red Card: Peter Zorbas 71 (second bookable offence)

Best Players:

3 BRETT EMERTON (SO)

2 Mark Byrnes (P)

1 Steve Eagleton (P)

Referee: Gerry Connolly

By Paul Goodwin

Competition leaders Sydney Olympic powered past Parramatta in a spine-tingling encounter last Tuesday night in front of the biggest crowd so far for the league's newest members.

A couple of thousand more than had seen Parramatta open their soccer campaign against Marconi, back in October, were on hand to see a match which began in hesitant fashion, but exploded into life once the first goal had been scored just minutes before the break.

It was one of those games which could realistically have gone either way, but two lethal strikes by Olympic sealed the 2-1 win for the on-fire inner-Sydney side, while Parramatta once again had to rue another game that got away from them.

Several incidents in the game were crucial to its final outcome.

A wild challenge and subsequent violent reaction by Olympic defender Chris Zoricich, when confronted by a powerful run through the heart of the defence by Mile Sterjovski, resulted in a caution, when many at the ground expected a dismissal.

Thus reprieved, Zoricich settled down and his team drew strength from his continued presence in the heart of their defence.

Later in the game, when it was not such a daunting task, Olympic found themselves short a man anyway, after an injudicious over-celebration by Peter Zorbas, following his scoring of the team's second goal, which ultimately proved to be the winning strike.

With virtually every player on the

field, with the exception of Power 'keeper Andrew Crews, camped inside the Olympic penalty area for the last ten minutes or so the game drew to a nail-biting climax.

If anything, the extra players Parramatta were required to commit forward made life harder for them as there was little space in which to operate and only rarely could they stretch the stacked Olympic defence.

High crosses and a lesser number of balls to feet were supplied by the boys in blue and gold, which saw Olympic defenders getting their bodies on the line to block a steady stream of shots from close range.

Olympic and Parramatta were evenly matched throughout and neither could gain any real ascendancy due to the competent work by men assigned as markers on either side.

Brett Emerton (below), who showed flashes of brilliance, especially after he moved into the centre late in the game, was on song and the hard running of Norman Tome and Pablo Cardozo up front contributed enormously to the Olympic success story on this occasion.

With most of the attention focussing on Cardozo recently, even during his fleeting partnership with guest player Ian



Rush, it was refreshing to see Tome show his true mettle.

As his coach, Branko Culina, acknowledged afterwards, there was nobody happier than Norman to see his equalising goal go in, as he has had to take a hard look at his approach to the game under Culina's blueprint for success.

Tome, in the words of Culina, took a good long look at himself, worked out what he needed to do to satisfy his mentor, then got on with it responsibly and is now reaping the rewards.

Olympic began well, but the first chance fell to Power through Jon Angelucci in the second minute when he chased a long ball out of defence which George Bouhoutsos, however, reached first and booted to safety.

Mile Sterjovski had a shot blocked in the 23rd after a free kick had been earned when Ante Juric impeded him on his way through on goal. The high cross from the right had not been collected cleanly by big Olympic 'keeper George Bouhoutsos and it fell invitingly for Sterjovski, but defend-

ers did the necessary work to keep the ball out.

Olympic began to take the game to Parramatta after this and it needed some stout defending by the home defence to repel strong raids by Emerton, Tome, Cardozo and Nick Carle.

Joey's skipper Mark Byrnes, quickly adjusting to the pace and class of the NSL, was always to the fore in dealing with the Olympic threat and was on hand to deflect an Emerton cross in the 27th which looked like setting up a shot, in doing so gladly conceding a corner.

From the flag-kick by Emerton the ball was latched onto by Tome and Cardozo in turn, but this time it was the Power defenders who got in the way.

Mile Sterjovski made his strong run through the middle in the 29th and tangled with Zoricich who conceded the free kick just 25 yards out from goal and right in front.

Angered by the ruling, the Olympic player retraced his steps to confront both Sterjovski and referee Gerry Connolly, who dished out a yellow card for his trouble. The reaction of Zoricich appeared severe and would have been well worthy of dismissal on many another evening.

From the free kick Sterjovski was on target, but the ball was deflected off a defender for a corner.

Ahmad Elrich did some good work on the right after getting a long, cross-field pass from the industrious Steve Eagleton in the 36th and fed Walter Ardone whose shot cleared the bar.

Parramatta opened the scoring in the 43rd when Angelucci won the ball inside his own half and sent the ball on to Sterjovski who soon found Jacob Burns free on the left. Burns hit an awkward looking, deep cross to the near post where Sterjovski challenged Bouhoutsos and the ball ran onto the far post where Angelucci bundled it over the line.

It seemed a good time to score, but immediately after the break it was clear that Olympic would not be taking this lying down.

In the 51st the lively Lindsay Wilson ran into the area on the left after he had combined well with Tome on the right and his shot was blocked by Joe Vrkic.

Tome was soon to fare better himself when, in the 57th, he was allowed a free header at the far post, in stooping fashion, after a precision cross from the right by Cardozo who proved elusive for most of the game, as he came repeatedly from deep positions. Tome took his goal well to bring the sides level once more, but it was the vision of Cardozo which was the telling factor.

Parramatta had a chance to regain the lead after Bouhoutsos held onto the ball too long, in the 61st, but they took their indirect free kick inside the area without it touching another player, thus negating a brilliant strike into the roof of the net by Sterjovski.

In the 67th Angelucci squandered a chance after a ball had been cleared to his feet, managing to hit his shot straight at the keeper.

Four minutes later came the winner. Peter Zorbas, working hard in mid-field and not looking too much of a danger going forward, moved into the Parramatta half on the left, then, after slipping past two defenders, noticed Andrew Crews



Peter Zorbas: his first NSL goal will be one to remember for various reasons.

guarding only his near post.

Zorbas elected to strike for goal, from 30 yards out and his shot skimmed along the sodden turf and darted just inside the far post, low and true.

It was a bolt from the blue and in celebrating his excellent strike Zorbas did a somersault which took him outside the field of play and brought him an unneeded caution, his second of the game, thus reducing Olympic to ten men for the last 20 minutes.

Parramatta committed more and more players forward in the remaining minutes but their approach was mostly dealt with by an Olympic defence which was able to read every tactic by the home side.

Time and again the ball was pumped forward, but given the lack of space, none of the players could get a decent look at the target or find room to explore new options.

Near the end Byrnes came up to join the attack and several headers of his flashed just wide, probably the best chances his team had of at least salvaging a point.

Crosses by Burns and Peter Bennett were the ones to cause problems, with Byrnes attacking them intelligently, but there was also one Sterjovski shot which Bouhoutsos did well to tip over in a final few minutes which had the crowd on its feet.

In all it was an enthralling contest, yet both sides were weakened by absent players.

Gabriel Mendez, Zlatko Arambasic, Peter Tsekenis and Scott Thomas were all absent from the Olympic line up, while Milan Blagojevic, Richard Plesa and John Gibson all missed the boat for Power for whom a still-unfit Joel Griffiths came on as a late substitute, to no avail.

While Branko Culina waxed lyrical about his side's commitment and explained that the young players he has been grooming are beginning to make their presence felt, David Mitchell was upset that his team had allowed two goals to be conceded through lapses in concentration and 'amateur behaviour'.

He expected and expects better from his full time professional players these days.

The heat takes its toll but Glory win ... just.



PERTH GLORY 1

Boutsianis 62

MARCONI STALLIONS 0

Tuesday night at Perth Oval, Sydney. Crowd 13,153

Round 13
game

MATCH STATS:

PERTH GLORY: Petkovic, Trajkovski (Afkos 70), Harnwell, Naven, Edgar Jr, Miller, Halpin (Edwards 74), Boutsianis (Buljabasic 85), Ergic, Wehrman, Despotovski

MARCONI: Turnbull, Farah, Gibson, Smith, Care, Maloney (Severino 86), Renaud, McDonald (Karl 79), Duric (Trajanovski 61), Zoric, Babic,

Yellows:

Glory: Edgar Jr 3, Despotovski 14
Marconi: Care 17, Duric 28, McDonald 50, Maloney 81.

Reds:

Glory: Wehrman 28
Marconi: Babic 37

BEST PLAYERS:

3-Christian Care (Marconi)
2-Rob Trajkovski (Glory)
1-Jason Petkovic (Glory)

Referee: Brett Hugo

By Dennis Gedling

Perth Glory did enough in horrific heat to defeat Marconi in a game riddled with poor refereeing decisions and skills. Both teams finished the game with ten men thanks to unprofessional retaliations by Kasey Wehrman and Zeljko Babic.

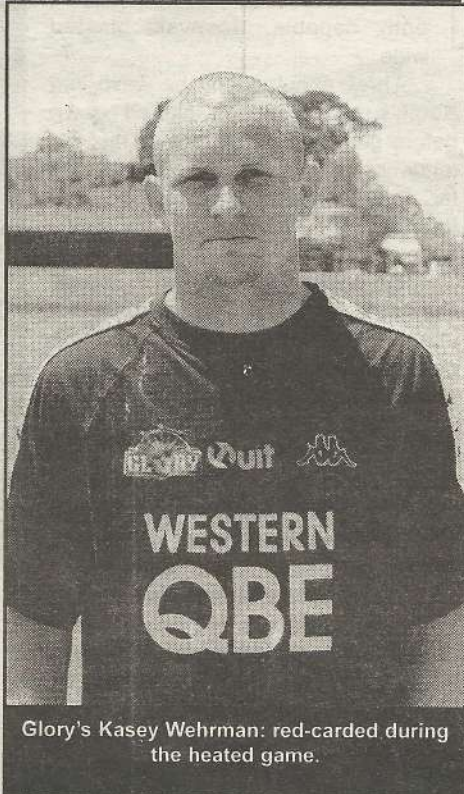
The main highlight (which were very few and far between) was the return of Vinko Buljabasic, who almost capped a fairytale return missing an easy header near the end. Buljabasic took the place of the injured Thorp (the irony is incredible isn't it?) on the bench with Edwards and Afkos.

Marconi were missing Awaritefe but boasted a line up full of power including Socceroos Babic and Maloney.

The game got off a hot start, Glory defender Edgar Junior booked for a tackle that maybe wasn't worthy of a booking, the Brazilian's rants in Portuguese at the referee not helping his cause.

After five minutes Glory had a great chance when Despotovski flicked a great pass to Boutsianis, the bleach blonde forward's lob at goal just missing the top right hand corner.

Glory keeper Petkovic was winded by a rampant Care after 10 minutes, nothing very malicious in the injury.



Glory's Kasey Wehrman: red-carded during the heated game.

Despotovski was then booked for some baffling reason in the 17th minute by a referee not seeming to cope with the hot pace of the game.

Care was then booked in the 21st minute, his tackle not that different to Edgar's.

The match reached its turning point in the 30th minute when Maloney was virtually rugby-tackled in the area, the resulting penalty missed by Gibson who slammed his shot into the right hand post.

On the break after the penalty miss (which finally brought the sweltering crowd to life) Wehrman was tackled hard by Farah, Wehrman retaliated in what seemed to be a lower arm strike on the Marconi defender.

The resulting wrestle caused an all in push and shove, the referee showing a red card yet again to Wehrman.

Marconi had the one up on Glory until 10 minutes later when Babic left his mark on the game (or was it the Glory defender's face) when he was sent off for retaliating to a hard challenge by Harnwell - he proceeded to wrestle with Harnwell appearing to strike him once. Walking off the field he decided to yell at various members of the crowd, Glory management and anyone

else who made eye contact. Babic's little performance was nothing short of unprofessional and immature.

Two of the bookings, a dubious penalty decision resulted in the referee getting a police escort at half time, his performance about as welcome as the heat.

In the second half Glory had the early chances, a very close offside decision denied Despotovski a goal.

Marconi seemed to lift after the sending off, dominating the left side and

forcing Petkovic to make the first of two brilliant saves in the 56th minute.

Glory hit the lead thanks to an excellent volley from Boutsianis. A perfect pass finding a free Trajkovski (who was having an excellent game) who in turn sent in a perfect cross for the former South Melbourne player to put past the keeper.

Soon after the goal Trajkovski made way for Afkos, the Socceroo's game one of his best this season.

Ergic had two golden chances to put the Glory further in front, Afkos finding plenty of space with a great run preferring to square it rather than take a shot, Ergic missing an easy finish.

Halpin soon made way for Edwards in the 74th minute and Marconi started looking for hopeful long balls onto the left wing, Afkos being caught out constantly at the back.

Marconi's golden chance was squandered in the 82nd minute when substitute Karl (who replaced the angry ant McDonald a minute earlier) should have buried a one-on-one with the keeper but went wide, his agony showing for all to see.

Hard working but frustrated Maloney was subbed for Severino to little or no effect.

In the 85th minute Buljabasic came on to a standing ovation. Buljabasic's first touch inch perfect finding a running Despotovski whose return cross found Buljabasic to head in the easiest of chances, but it went so cruelly over the bar, the fairytale not quite complete.

The final whistle sounded and the fans went home happy, perhaps a little frustrated from the missed chances by numerous Glory and Marconi players. The heat not only giving the crowd a short fuse, but affecting many players as McDonald picked up a booking and was lucky not to be booked on other occasions, his battle with Miller on the wing a standout on a relatively frustrating afternoon.

After the match Glory coach Bernd Stange (pictured left) was quick to point out that: "That is not international level what he has done, he must control his game" in reference to Wehrman's latest sending off.

Marconi coach Eddie Krncevic was worried about the heat saying that "you wonder whether games should be put on



Dynamic Chris Care: Marconi's hard-working midfielder.

at this time."

The night of this match Farah was admitted to hospital because of dehydration, if this isn't yet another reminder of the need for night-time glory matches then what is?

Glory now travel to Sydney, minus Wehrman, to battle league leaders Sydney Olympic, the return of Buljabasic a massive psychological boost to the side that has come through a hard month of fixtures in a good position.

Marconi are at home to the Knights, a win will get some form of consistency going for a side that was now out of the top six.

Trajkovski made a welcome return to form for the Glory finding space and having numerous attempts on goals.

Petkovic made many fine saves because the likes of Maloney and Care were at their usual best, creating many chances for the Stallions with their shooting ability.

Consistency and form is hard to get for these teams with the inept refereeing and sometimes below par skills because of the intense pressure, but these two sides are more than worthy winning the league, and more than worthy of better matches than the one exhibited at Perth Oval this day.



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Clarky stars in South's final test before Brazil


SYDNEY UNITED 0
SOUTH MELBOURNE 2

Curcija 60, Coveny 66.

Tuesday night at Sydney United Sports Centre, Sydney. Crowd 2,179

 Round 13
game

MATCH STATS:
SYDNEY UNITED:

Tolios, Kupresak (Jurilj 45), Bosnar, Savoca, Arrarte (Deak 86), Pondeljak, Maric, Rastall, Genc (Bozinovski 79), Moric, Bosevski.

SOUTH MELBOURNE:

Jones, Iosifidis, De Amicis, Orlic, Blatsis (Liparoti 45), Clarkson, Panopoulos, Coveny, Trimboli (Tsekinis 80), Curcija, Alagich.

Yellow Cards:

Sydney United: Genc 9, Maric 29,

BEST PLAYERS:
3. CLARKSON (SOUTH MELBOURNE)

 2. Jones (South Melbourne)
1. Pondeljak (Sydney United)

Referee: David Dwight

By Stephen Webb

At their last meeting, at the end of the previous season, these clubs faced one another in the national soccer league grand final.

One team lost the May 30 encounter 2-3 and then lost 16 players to a new entrant in the league. Now it is coming last in the competition and a succession of rainy home games have kept the crowds away.

The other team has played its last game before flying to Brazil and contesting the World Club Championships ... and pocketing nearly \$4 million.

Such are the fortunes of football in Australia.

And misfortune continued to frown grimly on Sydney United last Tuesday.

Even with a depleted strike force the home side took the game to the champions and dominated the first half. If chances and shots on target counted for anything Sydney United would have been handsome victors.

But South Melbourne paced themselves better, took control of the second half and demonstrated again - if it still needs proving - that finishing is what counts, even if you have only a few chances to convert.

From the outset South Melbourne's defence found it difficult to manage United's nippy forwards on the heavy pitch.

On numerous occasions the full-backs lost their footing as United's long balls came through.

The buzz in the press box was about South Melbourne's flat back four. Surely they wouldn't be taking that to Brazil against Manchester United?

Particularly since even Sydney United could cut through it so easily?

After several fast raids, Sydney had its first shot in the second minute. Aytec Genc was responsible for the lead-up, taking on the big backs and holding up the

ball. When the cross came in from the right South's Nick Orlic slipped but Nahuel Arrarte's effort in front of goal failed.

Even Nick Bosevski - reputedly not the fastest of United's players - was looking quick and on a couple of instances was only marginally caught by the offside trap. Once, when he was clear down the right, his team-mates didn't provide the support in the middle.

For most of the first half United looked the more dangerous. Bosnar and Savoca were confidently closing down South Melbourne's more illustrious attackers while Genc, Pondeljak and Bosevski ran at the defence.

Only David Clarkson, who chased for the whole game, stood out for South Melbourne in the first half, though keeper Chris Jones saw plenty of action.

Paul Trimboli - nearly back to fitness with 170 minutes on the pitch within a week after eight weeks out - made a few almost penetrating passes.

In the 14th minute he took the ball to the line on the left side of United's penalty area and slipped a ball in past Rastall and Kupresak. South Melbourne won a corner which Kupresak headed clear. When the ball came back in Vaughan Coveny headed high over the bar.

United were soon on the attack



Michael Curcija: the Olyroo scored for South.

again. Bosevski was caught offside but Arrarte broke through and Jones had to come out of his box to clear.

In the 20th minute South's Fausto De Amicis took the ball for a long run down the left and turned into the box before delivering a low cross.

Play again swept to the other end. Orlic conceded a corner, taken by Pondeljak and headed over by Bosevski.

United's goalkeeper, Steven Tolios, making his debut in the national league, had his first uncomfortable moment in the 25th minute.

Joe Moric pointlessly fouled Coveny who had received the ball in a well-covered position from Trimboli. Curcija's free

kick threaded low to Tolios who couldn't hold. His defenders came to his aid.

With half an hour gone, Genc got the better of Alagich and crossed to Bosevski 20 metres out. Instead of drilling it, as he is apparently capable, Bosevski blasted wide.

Three minutes later he wove into South's box but was closed down before getting his shot away. This, the tendency to take the ball one step too far, was perhaps the aspect of class (lacking) that was to make the difference on the day.

So it was that in the 37th minute Pondeljak made a strong run, breaking into the right side of South Melbourne's penalty area. But he held on too long and his cross was blocked.

In the 39th minute Genc forced Jones to make his best save of the match. Genc broke clear on the left but Jones came off his line and got down well to deny United what seemed a certain goal.

A minute later Jones was needed again. Bosevski was free on the right and Jones had to run out to clear.

South Melbourne occasionally found time to settle and build at their own pace but for the most part they were rattled and backfooted.

It was Orlic, however, who nearly provided the small Sydney crowd with some joy at the end of the first half.

After fouling Rastall dashing down the right flank, from the resulting corner off the free, Orlic headed back towards his own goal - Jones clutched the ball as it dropped under the crossbar.

The second half saw South Melbourne gain composure and the home side wither.

Though South's coach Ange Postecoglou denied he'd changed tactics, the visitors' backline looked a little less "flat".

Sydney's forwards couldn't sustain the pace, their passes were increasingly wayward and they resorted to long range shots which just gave Jones catching practice.

Captain Velimir Kupresak, who on December 19 beat Manis Lamond's record of 238 matches for Sydney United, had left the pitch with recurring knee trouble. United missed his calmness in defence and strength in the air.

South Melbourne clearly had the edge.

In the 47th minute Curcija mis-hit in front from a Coveny cross.

Three minutes later a ball from the right fell awkwardly for the United defence but Curcija had time to pick his angle. His shot slammed against the right upright.

Pondeljak still put pressure on the South Melbourne defence and in the 59th minute Genc ended a good Sydney United build up with a long, low shot that Jones held safely.

After that South Melbourne took control.

In the 60th minute Iosifidis produced a gem of a run down the right, slipping the ball inside, collecting the return and taking the ball into the box.

His cross was perfect for Curcija whose volley was unstoppable.

Then it was De Amicis' turn to put together a penetrating run and cross. The ball eventually fell for Iosifidis and on to Trimboli who executed a masterful back-heel into the path of Coveny running through. Coveny hit it first time, driving the ball beyond the helpless Tolios' left hand.



David Clarkson: warmed up for his battle with Man Utd's Roy Keane with a gritty performance.

Sydney United looked like a team at the bottom of the ladder but still mustered sufficient energy to inflict a few stings.

Bosevski's legs seemed to have deserted him yet in the 74th minute he produced a sharp shot that cannoned off a defender's back. From the clearance Arrarte hit a low shot from distance, held by Jones on the ground.

A minute later Pondeljak, on the run, cracked a long-range shot just over the bar. Two minutes later Arrarte fired in another long shot from the right, again held well by Jones.

In fact, the only time Jones didn't keep the ball in his arms there were no United players running through to punish him.

In the 80th minute Pondeljak struck a fierce 20-metre shot that Jones had to double-fist away.

Five minutes later the United forward had the ball at his feet inside the box. Orlic's head ruined a definite chance.

Two more opportunities came Pondeljak's way: a free kick which he fired into the South Melbourne wall; and the rebound which he put over the crossbar.

After the match Postecoglou was adamant he intended to use the new back four arrangement in Brazil. He said he had also tried it against Wollongong and intended South Melbourne to use it for the rest of the season.

He said Souths' second half movement was better, they had created chances and gained the confidence to knock the ball around more.

Postecoglou mightn't have had much to be happy about - apart from a valuable three points - especially considering the markedly different credentials of his next opponents.

But Sydney United coach David Ratcliffe cut a much more forlorn figure. His side was lightweight up front - he had three strikers he couldn't use, either through suspension or injury. "The boys on the pitch created chances ... but just couldn't take them."

Ratcliffe has no options.

His loyal veteran captain Kupresak needs an operation but continues to play in pain. The younger players look at recent matches in frustration, thinking only of what might have been.

Ref the talking point despite Harris' cracker



BRISBANE STRIKERS 1

Harris 56

WOLLONGONG WOLVES 1

Petrovski 29

Tuesday night at Suncorp Metway Stadium, Brisbane. Crowd 2,611

Round 13 match



MATCH STATS:

BRISBANE STRIKERS:

1. Bolton, 2. Gwynne, 3. Stefanutto, 4. Davidson, 6. Ditton, 8. Pilic (14. North 34'), 9. Foster, 12. Dwyer (7. Smeltz 60'), 13. McLaren, 16. Grierson, 17. Harris (19. Baldwin 76')



WOLLONGONG WOLVES:

1. Pogliacomi, 2. Souris, 3. Ceccoli, 4. Stanton, 6. Horsley, 7. Reid, 8. Surjan (13. Spencer 75'), 10. Young (17. Masi 80'), 11. Chipperfield, 14. Petrovski, 15. Huxley (12. Harlock 84')

Yellow Cards:

Strikers: G Gwynne (BS) 33', Peter Grierson 55', Andrew Davidson 87'
Wollongong: Paul Reid 43', Matt Horsley 74', Stuart Young 75'

Red:

Wollongong: Paul Reid 73' (second yellow)

BEST PLAYERS:

1 STUART YOUNG (WOLLONGONG)
2 Clint Bolton (Brisbane)
3 Jeromy Harris (Brisbane)

Referee: Simon Micallef



Wolves coach Nick Theodorakopoulos' side was on the end of more doubtful refereeing.

By Cameron Atfield

Jeromy Harris produced a contender for goal of the year in the Brisbane's 1-1 draw with Wollongong at Suncorp Metway Stadium on Saturday night.

However, it was a contentious decision by referee Simon Micallef that dominated post-match discussions.

Wollongong's Paul Reid was sent off in the 73rd minute for a second bookable offence - a decision which seemed more than a little harsh.

Predictably, Wollongong coach Nick Theodorakopoulos was furious.

"If the referees are going to control the end result, why do you need people like John (Kosmina) and I?" he said.

"It's not good enough. If we're talking about a 12-team league and professionalism increasing the people through the turnstiles, this really has to be looked at."

Brisbane coach John Kosmina echoed Theodorakopoulos' sentiments.

"The referees have got to understand that people pay money to watch the players and not them," he said.

"Nick's bloke should never have been sent off tonight - it hardly deserved a free kick."

South-East Queensland's drenching rain cleared well before kick-off, but the break in the weather was not enough to convince the Brisbane public to turn out in force.

The disappointing crowd of 2,611 added to the speculation the club could move to Carrara Stadium on the Gold Coast in an attempt to boost numbers, despite the "Banana Army" support group voicing their disapproval through the night.

The game started very slowly with neither side showing any attacking flair or initiative until the 16th minute, when the Strikers had the first real scoring opportunity.

Harris (pictured right) got on the end of a well-weighted Peter Grierson left foot chip, but his header went over the bar.

Just a minute later, Wollongong had their first chance with a Saso Petrovski shot. Luckily for Brisbane's Soccerroo keeper Clint Bolton, the shot went across the face of goal.

The game opened up, and minutes later the Strikers went forward through defender Shane Stefanutto. His cross found Peter Dwyer, who in turn directed the ball to Grierson. His headed shot went into the side-netting.

Just as the Strikers were stamping their authority on the match, Wollongong scored a soft goal against the run of play in the 29th minute.

Alvin Ceccoli's cross from the left found Petrovski, who evaded his marker to head the ball past Bolton.

Kosmina took David Pilic off in the 34th minute, which allowed Jade North to make his first Strikers appearance since the Under-17 World Cup Finals in New Zealand.

The substitution almost paid immediate dividends for Kosmina when North, with his first touch of the game, sent a great cross from the right for Paul Foster.

The NSL's joint top goal-scorer headed his shot over Pogliacomi's goal.

North provided another great cross a few minutes later. This time, Pogliacomi did well to get a touch which denied Dwyer a great chance.

The Strikers were awarded a free kick 35 metres from goal when Paul Reid earned his first yellow for a challenge on Dwyer.

Jeromy Harris' powerful effort beat Pogliacomi, but only grazed the crossbar.

Despite the pressure, Wollongong went into the break with their one-goal lead intact.

They almost doubled their lead with the first play of the second half. Scott



Man of the match: Wolves Stuart Young (red shirt). Read his interview with Aidan Ormond next week in Inside Soccer.

Chipperfield turned his marker to provide a great cutback to Stuart Young. His shot was well saved by a diving Bolton.

Bolton was again called into action shortly afterwards, producing a magnificent save to his right from a Young shot.

Brisbane's reply to Wollongong's attack was the best goal seen at Suncorp Metway Stadium this season.

In the 57th minute, Harris looked to cross the ball from the right wing. Somehow, the ball sailed over Pogliacomi and went into his top right corner. The look of surprise on Harris' face suggested it was not intended as a shot, but he was happy enough to claim it.

Wollongong found themselves down to 10 men when Reid was sent off after a very soft challenge, but they still finished very strongly and could have snatched a victory.

Fijian international substitute Esala Masi made an immediate impact with a weaving run which had the Strikers defence chasing shadows, but his angled shot went across the face of goal.

Matthew Horsley also had a chance at the death, his low shot well saved by Bolton.

Theodorakopoulos was happy to go home with a point.

"Obviously we're happy with a point and you have to give credit to both sides," he said.

"Full credit to my players once again playing away from home against a side who, irrespective of whether they haven't won in three weeks, are in the six with similar points to us."

Kosmina was less impressed.

"We should be winning games at home," he said.

"(Wollongong) scored what I thought was a fairly soft goal, but they did enough to maybe earn the point.

"They defended quite well, especially when they were down to 10 men - they worked their asses off."

He said the Strikers' poor run of results could be attributed to lethargy.

"I think we're starting to get a bit of burnout with a lot of guys in the side hav-

ing played a whole season of XXXX League," he said.

"We have a couple of blokes who are looking a bit tired."

Both coaches said off-field turmoil was having a detrimental effect on their players.

Wollongong, in particular, was feeling the strain of Soccer Australia's new criteria for inclusion in the National League.

"I know certain senior directors and chairmen don't feel that threatened, but as soon as lot of the players saw reports from Sydney about the possibility of Wollongong not being there, they quickly rang the club," said Theodorakopoulos.

"They certainly have grouped us with the Sydney clubs rather than look at Wollongong as a provincial club... It is unsettling."

Kosmina took the opportunity to have a swipe at Soccer Australia.

"What I'd like to know is how Soccer Australia can put those kinds of demands on the clubs when they don't have that in place themselves in the first place," he said.

"One of the biggest problems we've got is that all the codes we compete against have got the backing of the national body, while Soccer Australia doesn't even have a marketing manager.

"The Brisbane Lions get money from the AFL. The Broncos get money from the NRL. The Players' Union gets more money out of TV rights than the clubs do - the clubs get zilch.

"Soccer Australia puts all these constraints and expectations on the clubs, what about them living up to it? Who are they accountable to? They make their own rules and they keep changing them as they go along."

The Strikers have had their own run of bad publicity, including rumours of a relocation to Carrara Stadium on the Gold Coast.

"I think recent publicity has probably affected the players, but they should be used to it up here. But at the end of the day, players get paid to play. They don't get paid to play politics," he said.

"If we're going to Carrara or we're going to Bundaberg, I don't care. You do your job and you play no matter where you go."

Force revival in full swing after Kingz win



ADELAIDE FORCE 2
Vidmar 30, Mori 87
FOOTBALL KINGZ 0

Tuesday night at Hindmarsh Stadium, Adelaide. Crowd 5,720

Round 13
game

MATCH STATS:



ADELAIDE FORCE:

Knezevic, Tobin (Hornjik 28), Talladira, Mori, Veart, Sabljak, Vidmar, Costanzo, Hassell (Brain 78), Pelosi, Kim.



FOOTBALL KINGZ:

Batty, Perry, Bunce, Jones, Vicelich, Middleby (Silva 72), Osman, Ngata, Stergiopoulos (Jackson 46), de Jong, Rufer.

Yellow Cards:

Force: Talladira (17)
Kingz: Jones (8), Middleby (29), Stergiopoulos (45), Jackson (83).

BEST PLAYERS:

3 VEART (FORCE)
2 Vidmar (Force)
1 Vicelich (Kingz)

Referee: Eddie Lennie

By Margaret Bowden
and Donald Campbell

A strong breeze blowing to the Eastern side of the ground threatened to make it difficult for both sides to keep the ball in play, but it dropped just before the kick-off. Fans took advantage of the new Eastern stand, the shadow from the huge Western stand shielding them from the slowly setting sun.

The Hindmarsh pitch was once again a lush green, adding to the spectacle at Australian soccer's showpiece.

The talking point was the Kingz' strip. No colour clash this time - all white with black socks. Adelaide City Force were in their traditional black and white stripes, black shorts and white socks.

As the teams lined up for the Australian and New Zealand national anthems, it dawned on the spectators that both teams were sporting City sponsor Barilla logos on their shirts.

The Kingz were wearing City's away strip! After their last visit, when it was almost impossible to tell the sides apart, the clash was reported to Soccer Australia.

But the Kingz again came to

Adelaide with the same strip. Consultation between referee Eddie Lennie, Soccer Australia and the Kingz saw the Kingz agree to wear City's away strip. Eddie Lennie and his assistants also stood out this time in bright yellow shirts.

Other differences this time, besides the score and Marcus Stergiopoulos' hair colour, were the line-ups. City were without Ivan Zelic, Nathan Day and Matthew Kemp (on the bench), while the Kingz were without keeper Utting, injured in their last clash, Stu Riddle and Aaron Lines.

Player coach Wynton Rufer, who made a big impact when he came off the bench last time, was on from the start.

Team attitudes seemed reversed also. The entire City team played with uncanny desperation, team spirit and communication, which seemed lacking from the Kingz.

So attacking were City, the fans cheered them throughout the match, then gave them a standing ovation at the end. Last home game they were booing.

Revelation of the game was the brilliant performance of 88.5 Coast FM Bianco Builders Player of the Match,

Carl Veart, who seems to have finally found a position which suits his talents.

Playing in defence instead of up front, Veart dominated the game from the back with his surging runs and perfectly timed and weighted long passes to Damian Mori. Carlo Talladira, also on the outer earlier in the season, was inspirational alongside Veart.

New import Atila Hornjik made an earlier than expected debut, coming on in the 28th minute for Alex Tobin, who suffered an eye injury contesting a header with Kingz' Fred de Jong.

This match was anything but a replay of the last encounter. The boot was well and truly on the other foot. City showed glimpses of the well-oiled machine of seasons past, while the Kingz looked at odds with each other. They had four players cautioned and Stergiopoulos was lucky to stay on the park after a vicious two footed high tackle on Nick Sabljak in the 45th minute.

Rufer substituted Stergiopoulos with Chris Jackson for the second half; Jackson was also booked!

The first half belonged to City. Claudio Pelosi performed a miraculous volley after a brilliant passing sequence between Veart and Vidmar, but Che Bunce headed his effort clear. Mori had the next chance but got an awkward bounce.

Ivan Vicelich and Stergiopoulos combined down the left to pressure the City defence, crossing into the penalty area for de Jong and Rufer, but Tobin and Angelo Costanzo head-

ed clear. Robbie Middleby cut down Vidmar with a reckless challenge and was duly cautioned. Vidmar lofted the resultant free kick into the penalty area, the ball was cleared, Sabljak ran onto it, passed wide to Mori free on the right, who raced into the penalty area and passed square to Vidmar unmarked near the left post.

Kingz' keeper Jason Batty turned to block the shot but 'Viddie' slotted the ball clinically into the right hand bottom corner of the net - 1-0 City.

Irate Kingz' players surrounded the linesman on the Western side, screaming for offside.

Both sides upped the tempo to an incredible pace. Rufer had a chance to level. He found himself free in the penalty area, but his left foot shot skewed off the side of his boot well wide. Bradley Hassell could have put City further ahead with a clear shot from 20 metres after a build up from Costanzo and Vidmar, but he boomed it over the bar.

A long clearance from Batty over the City defence fell for De Jong, who steamed into the penalty area ready to shoot as Vilson Knezevic raced out to the ball. As he punched the ball clear, he collided with de Jong, injuring his hand in the process. The ball fell to Rufer who shot over the bar, with Knezevic on the ground!

The Kingz turned the tables in the second half, forcing six corners in the first fifteen minutes. Substitute Jackson made an immediate impact, with a long shot over the bar.

De Jong slipped into the box, hassling

the City defence into a hurried clearance. He and Levent Osman forced Knezevic into two brilliant saves. Knezevic charged down de Jong's slammer from 15 metres, then dived on Osman's point blank shot at the far post.

City meanwhile were constantly caught offside. When Mori, Vidmar and Pelosi managed to beat the offside trap, the finish eluded them. Mori sounded warning bells mid-way through the half when he sprinted 40 metres, wove through the Kingz' defence and let fly from close range - wide of the right post.

Then, against the run of play, he scored City's second goal. Vidmar stole the ball in the midfield and split the offside trap with a magic pass for Mori, who sped goalward and made no mistake - 2-0 City after 67 minutes.

Desperation gripped both sides. Vicelich flattened Sabljak but escaped a card. Rufer charged into the penalty area but Knezevic beat him to the ball.

Mori sent Sabljak away on the right for a pen-



Man of the match for Adelaide City: Carl Veart the master defender!

etrating run into the box. Sabljak ran the ball to the bye line, cut it back, then shot. The ball rebounded to Mori who skied it over the bar. De Jong almost headed in from a corner cross, but Knezevic grabbed the ball off his head.

Veart put in the tackle of the match to deny de Jong a chance. Costanzo raced forward onto a long ball with only Batty to beat, but was unable to control it; Mori back-heeled to Pelosi 15 metres out but the Italian import took too long to shoot; the Kingz cleared the ball for a throw-in.

With Batty out of position, Sabljak threw the ball long for Pelosi, Bunce headed clear, Mori gained possession and slotted the ball under Batty - offside!

What a comedy of errors - what entertainment! And so ended this enthralling spectacle.



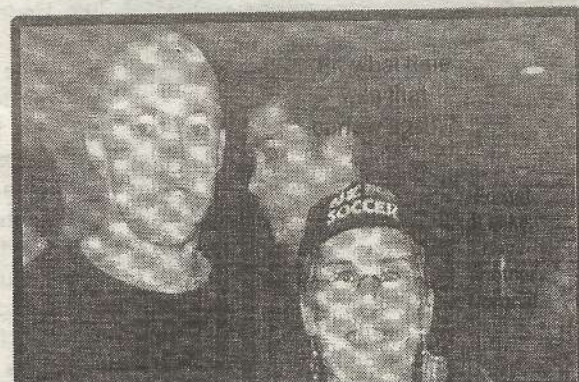
Reliable Kingz defender Ivan Vicelich.

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The 'Fak Factor' gives Falcons the edge



MELBOURNE KNIGHTS 0

GIPPSLAND FALCONS 1

MacNicol 18

Tuesday night at Knights Stadium, Melbourne. Crowd 3,661

Round
13 game

MATCH STATS:

MELBOURNE KNIGHTS:

John, Banini (Vassallo 66"), Kelic, Kiratzoglou, Urlovic, Abbas, Vukadin, Susa, Cervinski, Silic (Trupkovic 82"), Reda (Magdic 46").

GIPPSLAND FALCONS:

Jevdjovic, Fak, Gotis, Durakovic, MacNicol, Bell, Puca (Savage 40"), Hutchinson, Kakos Hastie 75"), Marcina, Nilo

Yellow Cards:

Knights: Susa 4, Cervinski 20, Silic 30, Banini 59, Vukadin 89

Falcons: Durakovic 46, Fak 59, MacNicol 65.

BEST PLAYERS:

3 - FAK (GIPPSLAND)
2 - MacNicol (Gippsland)
1 - Susa (Knights)

Referee: Brian Precious

talise with the visitors deservedly taking the spoils on a gloomy grey afternoon in Melbourne.

Gippsland coach Jeff Hopkins

cially, across their back three of Jason Vukadin, Ransford Banini and Murtala Abbas. Banini's lack of fitness (and pace) was to later draw stinging criticism from coach Vanis at the post-match media conference.

The best three chances of the game could well have ended in Gippsland taking a commanding three goal cushion into the break.

The summary of these chances reads thus: in the 11th minute pocket-sized speedster Juan Nilo burst out of the

mouth saw a well-positioned Puca clear safely away.

Forty five minutes of normal time plus stoppages had elapsed, and the Knights had looked well under the pump.

The first twenty-five minutes of the second half saw some feature-less, too-ing and fro-ing in midfield with passing mistakes most obvious, much to the great disappointment expressed by a sighing Knights faithful watching the game slip out of their reach.

Fast forward the half until about 20



Flying Falcon: Gippsland keeper Bojo (pronounced Boyo) Jevdjovic saves from a Knights attack in the 1-0 away win. Inset is man of the match the doughty Falcons defender Dean Fak.

By Mark Fisher

From virtually the outset it looked like it was going to be Gippsland's day. The Falcons have surprised many by their robust, uncompromising approach to what is a critical season for all sixteen clubs, Gippsland included.

Their standing on the NSL table perhaps bears witness to Jeff Hopkins' (right) enormous confidence in his own team, despite a perennial lack of depth endured for many years by the Morwell-based establishment.

By contrast, and with the way the coaching merry-go-round has been in action in Victoria of late, Vlado Vanis must know he is a man under some pressure at Somers Street.

He has had in five short weeks earned a couple of wins, two home losses and an away draw, which is in itself not the worst record to have early on.

His coaching style, however, has attracted some criticism, and it will remain to be seen if he is able to continually extract the very best out of his thin playing squad until the end of this season.

Tuesday afternoon's events at Knights Stadium did little to dispel the notion that there exists a lack of commitment within the Melbourne side's playing ranks, highlighted by another frustrated bout of comments by the coach.

Vanis might have felt a little fortunate on Tuesday afternoon that he still had Olyroo Zeljko Susa to call into his starting eleven against the battling Falcons.

With Susa still yet to be admitted into Spanish First Division side Alaves due to winter weather hampering training (see story on page eight), his assistance in the Knights' midfield was just the boost the western Melbourne club required, although in the end they failed to capi-

enjoyed a bit of a bonus to his own squad during the last week, with the return of striker Igor Mandic (from suspension) and the re-instatement of midfielder Robbie Puca (who last weekend suffered a knock to the knee) adding firepower for the clash between two teams positioned in the lower half of the NSL ladder.

Gippsland's win had to be attributed purely to its efforts, and if statistics are anything to go by, the Falcons had about twice as many shots on goal as the Knights.

They had out-possessed and out-thought the home side for most of the match.

Brian MacNicol gave the Falcons the result in his second one-on-one with goalkeeper Martin John, although the final scoreline could well have looked even more substantial had the Falcons made the most of their first half opportunities.

From the kick-off, Gippsland got away in dominating fashion.

Within the space of ten minutes, the Falcons midfield clicked into gear and set the tone for the remainder of the half. Clayton Bell sent a cross in the fifth minute to attacking midfielder John Hutchinson, but his header went wide.

One minute later Bell put MacNicol through only for the defence to close. The very next minute saw Robbie Puca send a sharp cross to MacNicol on the far post of goal, but the pace of the ball eluded the striker's outstretched boot.

The trend continued throughout the half, with the Knights looking uncharacteristically flat across the midfield and cru-

blocks with a good five metre break on Banini, and then shot just wide across the with only John to beat. You would have to rate it as a goal gone begging.

The second clear chance ended up as a brilliant save by Martin John. In the 17th minute the lanky MacNicol also broke through the centre, with daylight between him and the nearest defender.

He shot low and left at goal in a one-on-one with John, but the reflexes were with the Knights custodian as he latched improbably onto the goal-bound delivery.

MacNicol knew he should have put the last chance away, but he didn't get mad - he got even.

Barely half a minute later he took off again. Another break by MacNicol, another one-on-one with John, but this time Mac blasted powerfully into the roof of the net. This was clearly Gippsland's game. They were one-nil up on the home side, and weren't

about to crank back the intensity a single bit.

The service to the three forwards for Gippsland was really getting to the Knights. On the Knights bench, Vlado Vanis looked ropeable as time and again wingbacks Puca and Doug Marcina delivered accurately to the slackly-marked Falcons frontmen. Cervinski's yellow card for a bad challenge on Puca showed all the indelible signs of frustration.

Only Mark Silic and Zeljko Susa looked hungry enough to stem the tide of events. Silic went on a great run right through Bell and Durakovic just wide of the box, but his cross parallel with the goal

minutes to go, and finally a Silic-led revival looked like keeping the home side's hopes alive.

But, according to Jeff Hopkins' script, if it was the forwards who set up the win, it surely must be the task of the back three led by hard-man Mehmed Durakovic to close out the game in the dying stages.

The stand-out performer at the back for my mind was Dean Fak, whose praises were sung by Hopkins afterwards. "Dean Fak was outstanding today, especially in the last twenty minutes when the Knights put us under a bit of pressure with the wind," he said of his competent back-man.

Fak indeed became the hero for Gippsland late in the match. In the 79th minute, Silic sent a neat free kick across a well-attended goal mouth. Fak instinctively rose with Kelic at the far post in order to worry the striker out of a clean shot.

The Knights upped the ante into stoppages, only to see Fak step up a gear himself. He applied a superb tackle on Cervinski threatening on the right forward flank, and then pumped Gippsland into attack with a great long ball to the tiring legs of Brian MacNicol.

Fak then capped off a memorable performance just before the final whistle when he effected a great covering tackle on Kelic just wide of the box, treating the big striker with sufficient disdain.

The party was not going to be spoiled by any late flurry - not if Dean Fak was to have anything to do with it.

After notching up another valuable away win after 13 rounds, the fighting Falcons have so far proved virtually all of their doubters wrong so far.

With coach Jeff Hopkins soon to rejoin his team on the park, this trend could well continue deep into the new year.

Less is Moore as Breakers remain unbeaten



CARLTON 0

NEWCASTLE BREAKERS 0

Tuesday night at Olympic Park, Melbourne. Crowd 3,098

Round 13 game



MATCH STATS:
Carlton: Anastasiadis, Deans, Douglas, Marth, Slater (Markovski 74), Packer, Atkinson, Moreira (Thompson 59), Lapsansky, Conroy, Anthopoulos (Terminello 69).



Newcastle: Catlin, Moore, Pryce, Roberts, Dodd, McManus, Sprod, Wilson, Buonavoglia, Wieczorek (Smith 15, Tancheski 76), Harper.

Yellow Cards:

Carlton: Conroy 66, Lapsansky 88
Newcastle: Smith 25, McManus 54

BEST PLAYERS:

3. LUBO LAPSANSKY (CARL)
 2. Andrew Marth (Carl)
 1. Glenn Moore (Newc)

Referee: Mark Shield



Mike Conroy: no joy this time for the Carlton striker as the Breakers held on for a 0-0 draw.



Lubo the midfield master. Despite a dominating game, Lapsansky and co. could not break down Newcastle.

By Kevin Christopher

Carlton missed the opportunity to maintain pressure on leaders Sydney Olympic by failing to break down a resolute Newcastle last Tuesday night.

Furthermore, with their Round 14 match against South Melbourne postponed until March 1, the Blues may well find themselves back in the chasing pack by the time they resume action against Kingz FC on January 7.

In that context the draw was almost as bad as a loss, but after dominating both territorially and possession wise for most of the match, Carlton simply failed to create sufficient chances to thoroughly test Breakers' goalkeeper Bob Catlin.

The final scoreline was justice, in a sense. The home side earned a point by virtue of their dominance while the visitors deserved some tangible reward for their

persistence.

Newcastle's initial game plan was dealt a savage blow after just fifteen minutes when Brad Wieczorek was forced to leave the field with a right leg injury, but substitute Damian Smith responded in the appropriate manner, even if his team continued to be under the hammer.

Occasionally a counter-attack was launched but too often Buonavoglia and Harper lacked the support from midfield and were left to go it alone against one of the league's best defences.

Ultimately it was Carlton's lack of invention which cost it dearly, even though they managed to go close on half a dozen occasions.

The best chance fell to Alex Moreira just before the hour mark when he stabbed a low Con Anthopolous cross wide when it seemed easier to score.

As if to sum up the Brazilian's night he was immediately substituted and his replacement Archie Thompson was central in most of the Blues' best chances in the final half hour.

Until that point Moreira and Conroy had failed to connect and neither provided the necessary spark or penetration, although they weren't helped by the windy conditions nor the sturdy Breakers defence, marshalled expertly by Glenn Moore.

While Lubo Lapsansky roamed and ran the midfield at will, Andrew Marth often moved forward catching the defence in two minds, and he may well have opened the scoring after just four minutes when a twenty-five metre thunderbolt whistled safely past an upright.

His intentions had been made clear early, and he continued to be a threat both inside and outside the penalty area. His best chance came after sixty-six minutes when a loose ball fell to him on the six yard line following strong work from Mike Conroy, but he blasted the ball over the bar.

Thompson was the centre of attention in the final thirty minutes however. He fired a header from a Stuart Slater cross straight at Catlin before he ran on

to a Marth through ball only to see his chip clear the crossbar.

His closest effort came four minutes from time when a shot on the turn from close range skimmed past the near post, then in injury time he flashed a header wide after he had been picked out by a Sean Douglas cross.

To compound the Blues' misery coach Stuart Munro was sent from the bench two minutes from full-time after having a heated verbal disagreement with referee Mark Shield.

"Just frustration" was all Munro would offer in reference to the clash, but he was quick to find at least one positive from the night.

"I was actually very pleased we kept a clean sheet tonight because we haven't done that in recent weeks. We've conceded a goal, even if it's been a token gesture."

Beyond that however, it was difficult to find much to enthuse about.

"They're a very difficult team to play against. They play a simple system and they do it very well. We never had a lot of clear cut chances. There was lots of little bits and pieces but unless you take one of them and try and bring Newcastle out of their shell a bit, well, you're always under pressure."

"It was a frustrating game for the players and the coaches. But we knew that and it was up to us to break them down and we just didn't do it."

As expected, Lee Sterrey was jubilant at stretching his team's unbeaten run to six matches, although the unusual tactic of flying down two days before the game had little effect on the game.

"I don't think it made any difference, we were under the hammer for a lot of minutes tonight."

"In saying that we knew it was going to be difficult. Then again Roberts could have pinched one ten minutes into the second half, which would have been a blessing for us and we would have been hard to beat."

"The first half we gave away the ball far too many times on the counter-attack, our last pass wasn't there when it could have been better."

"All in all, credit goes to Carlton. They're a very good side. I reckon they're going to be up in the top two. Them (Carlton) and Perth Glory are the two best teams we've played this year by a long way."

And coming off the back of a 3-2 win over Perth, the Breakers have now inched their way into the top six.

The confidence is growing, and with three home matches on the trot the club are on the verge of mounting a serious top six challenge.

As Sterrey readily admitted, "I was pretty happy with the outcome. I don't think there's going to be many teams getting points down here."

MY BLUE HEAVEN

the independent voice of the fans of Carlton S.C.

\$2

LIFE AT OLYMPIC PARK PART II

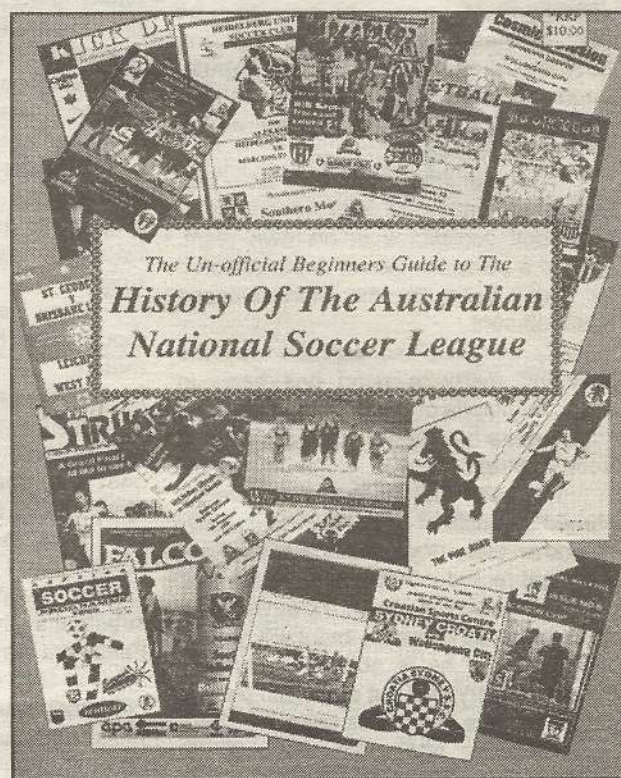


INSIDE
 Exclusive Interviews with the Brit Pack:
 David McPherson, Michael Conroy
 and Stuart Slater

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Issue 5 December 1999

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Crook and Perinich revive Arnie's Christmas Spirit



CANBERRA COSMOS 1

Polak 51

NORTHERN SPIRIT 3

Perinich 2, 74, Bingley 86

Tuesday night at Bruce Stadium, Canberra. Crowd 1,863

Round 13
game

MATCH STATS:

CANBERRA COSMOS:

Konstantinou, Burt, Purdue (Popovich 82), Polak, Winnie, Watkins (Musitano 72), Hamilton, James (Gonzalez 67), Kolpak, Hooker, Roberts

NORTHERN SPIRIT:

Perosh, Enes (Cunico 42), Bingley, Casserly, Slater (Snyder 38), Perinich, Cranney, Lyons, Bilokapic, Crook, Sobczyk (Moss 75)

Yellow Cards:

Cosmos: Hooker (11)

Spirit: Lyons (61), Bilokapic (80)

BEST PLAYERS:

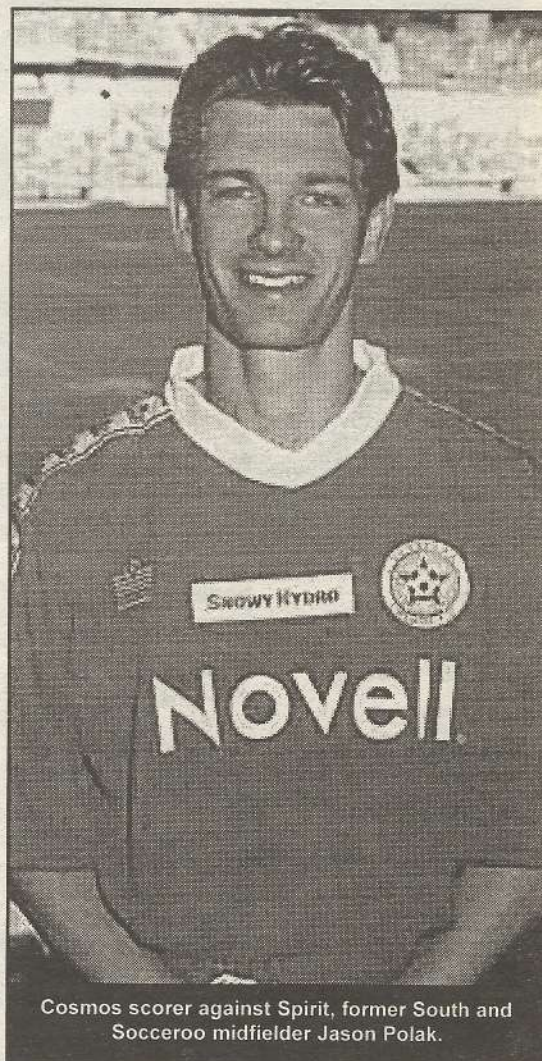
3: CROOK (NS)

2: Perinich (NS)

1: Bilokapic (NS)



Tony Perinich: two-goal haul just the tonic for the ailing Spirit.



Cosmos scorer against Spirit, former South and Socceroo midfielder Jason Polak.

By Nick Guoth

The Christmas cheer was well spread around but in the end the boys from Sydney spoil the fun for the brave Canberra supporters with a 3-1 victory.

Both sides in desperate need for a win after some horrendous performances in the last round saw a hard game with plenty of open play and goalmouth action.

The win helps propel the Spirit back up the table whilst lowering Canberra one place closer to the basement.

With both teams having something to prove, it was the experienced Spirit players who stood out and for coach Graham Arnold, this was important.

He said "I brought all the big name players back in. They are playing for their careers."

"I told them that they are the ones responsible for where we are and they are the ones who have to get us out of it."

And that they did especially with Ian Crook and Paul Bilokapic all over the park, the latter especially solid in defence. Their importance was more enhanced when first Robbie Slater and then Robert Enes both succumbed to injuries late in the first half.

Canberra coach Tom Sermanni benched a number of players following the loss to Wollongong. Even Toplica Popovich, who was to create a new record for appearances for the Cosmos, was only a substitute.

The game started with a bang. Within 55 seconds, Canberra should have been in the lead. A long ball from the left caught the Spirit defence still in the change-rooms. Harry James found himself free in the box, and was caught out when he let the ball stop in a puddle thus ruining any serious opportunity.

Then a minute later the Spirit made them pay. A quick free-kick from Ian Crook went to Luke Casserly who hooked up with Tony Perinich through a long ball

behind the defence. Perinich handled the surface better than James and slotted the ball past Angelo Konstantinou for the early lead.

A team that has only scored eight times this season over 12 rounds was off to the start it could only dream of. Yet it was more important that they build on this.

Both teams then settled into the game. The Spirit were slightly on top able to slot passes behind the defence and generating a couple of good opportunities from headers.

Paul Bilokapic missed a decent chance midway through the half.

At the half hour mark the Cosmos found some form. James provided PJ Roberts with the ball for a delightful cross which was headed just wide by Glen Kolpak. Then a few minutes later Jason Polak ran into the box and drew the keeper, but his attempted cross was well intercepted by Bilokapic.

The Spirit then suffered a double-blow when first Slater tripped over a stray leg and damaged his ankle and then a few minutes on Enes pulled his hamstring.

Yet the substitutes, Michael Cunico and Adam Snyder performed well. The latter had a good chance to increase the lead with five minutes remaining in the half but was foiled by Konstantinou who dived at his feet smothering the ball.

The half finished with Polak sending

a low drive from some 25m out which was well held by John Perosh. Both teams were still in the game and a result either way was well on the cards.

Again it was an opening flurry of action to warm up the fans. In the second minute Polak came close at one end and then a minute later David Winnie stuck his head in just the right place to stop Snyder finding his totally unmarked teammates.

Six minutes into the half and the scores were level. A Robert Hooker free-kick from inside his own half was headed on by Daniel Watkins to Polak who had snuck around behind the defence. Now one-on-one with Perosh, Polak nudged the ball under the advancing keeper.

The goal gave extra life to the Cosmos and they pressed hard for the next twenty minutes. They should have taken the lead only five minutes after the equaliser.

A ball across the park saw two Spirit defenders collide with each other. The ball spilled to Daniel Watkins who strode down the right and into the box. His low cross was met by James, but the midfielder mis-kicked the ball and saw it float wide of goal.

Yet Perinich was always a danger at the other end and he put his side back ahead in rather controversial circumstances.

Shane Lyons brought the ball in from the left, his shot was only muffled by Konstantinou and it ran on to Perinich who had a tap in from a metre out.

But there were many questions as to whether Perinich was on-side.



Ian Crook: the main reason for the Spirit revival in their 3-1 away win over Canberra.

With under 15 minutes to go, the Spirit went in for the kill. Snyder blocked an attempted clearance from the keeper

and the ball ballooned back into the box. With an open goal Perinich mis-kicked the ball completely and sent it wide.

Then with five minutes left the game was all but over as the Spirit scored their third. A harmless Casserly cross from the right was fumbled embarrassingly by Konstantinou and into the path of the extremely happy Matthew Bingley who tapped in from short range.

Both sides had a further chance, but neither could change the scoreline as the game petered out to its finish.

Graham Arnold is still quite surprised about his team's performance on the road. "We seem to play better away from home of late". He hopes the result can bring back the crowds for the next three rounds all at North Sydney Oval. "Hopefully, today is the start of something," he added.

"It was very heartening to score three goals", said Arnold on his team's lack of goal-scoring ability this season.

"We've lacked a goalscorer for the last 18 months and hopefully he (Perinich) will be our answer."

For Sermanni, there was disappointment in the result, but not the performance.

"I thought we played really well tonight. We created chances, got players forward and dictated the play for periods of the game."

"We were competitive and always well in the game."

Sermanni was very unhappy with the second goal stating that he wanted to see the replay.

"The second goal was the crucial point of the game."

"Still, if we continue to play like we did tonight with the same effort and commitment then we'll get results."

Ram

INSIDE JUNIOR SOCCER



NORTHERN DIVISION RESULTS

Tuesday 28 December:

NN.S.W.I.S. 1 Holman 31'	Newcastle Breakers Colts 2 Haynes 3', Blanning 88'
Marconi Colts 2 Sandoval 9', Peros 75'	Olympic Academy 3 Jomaa 47', 69', Carle 57'
Sydney United 1 Lo Proto 80'	Marconi Stallions 0
Wollongong Colts 0	N.S.W.I.S. 1 own goal 35'
Marconi Colts 0	Newcastle Breakers 2 Angievski 6', Gazzard 30'
Q.A.S. 6 (M Davidson 32', Walsh 45', 51', 63', Drake 73', Miner 88')	Wollongong Wolves 2 Ashley 34', Lucas 78'
A.C.T.A.S. 2 Aliffi 7', Veljanovski 82'	Northern Spirit 2 Catanzaro 23', R Griffiths 39'
Parramatta Power 0	Sydney Olympic 1 Doumanis 1'
North Spirit Colts 0	Sydney United Colts 0
Weekend Games:	
Wollongong Wolves 0	Parramatta Power 3 (scorers unavailable)
Newcastle Breakers 1 Juchniewicz 9'	Sydney United 0
Northern Spirit 2 R Griffiths 85', 87'	Q.A.S. 1 Miner 19'
Northern Spirit Colts 1 (scorers unavailable)	A.C.T.A.S. 2 (scorers unavailable)
N.S.W.I.S. 3 Engele 67', Bojic 81', Gavaghan 89' pen	Marconi Stallions Colts 3 Sandoval 25', 37', Burnett 56'
Marconi Stallions 3 Manente 33', Mondello 37', Anabalon 66'	Sydney Olympic Academy 0

NORTHERN DIVISION

	P	W	D	Bye	L	F	A	Pts
Parramatta Power	13	10	2	1	1	35	7	32
A.I.S.	13	9	2	1	2	51	14	29
Sydney Olympic	11	8	3	1	0	30	7	27
Q.A.S.	14	8	1	1	5	38	22	25
New Breakers	13	8	1	0	5	27	16	25
Northern Spirit	12	7	2	1	3	26	17	23
Marconi Stallions	12	7	0	1	5	19	19	21
A.C.T.A.S.	13	5	4	1	4	22	27	19
N.S.W.I.S.	13	5	3	1	5	23	15	18
Sydney United	10	5	1	1	4	18	18	16
Olympic Academy	13	5	0	1	8	29	47	15
Breakers Colts	14	4	1	1	9	18	30	13
North Spirit Colts	11	3	2	1	6	13	27	11
Marconi Colts	13	2	4	1	7	21	33	10
Woll. Wolves	12	3	1	1	8	12	26	10
Syd. United Colts	14	2	2	0	10	13	36	8
Wollongong Colts	10	0	1	1	9	6	40	1

SOUTHERN DIVISION

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Carlton	8	8	0	0	37	3	24
VIS	8	8	0	0	27	2	24
Bulleen Inter Kings	8	6	1	1	22	11	19
Melbourne Knights	9	3	2	4	26	21	11
South Dandenong	8	3	2	3	12	12	11
Gippsland Falcons	7	3	2	2	10	15	11
South Melbourne	7	3	0	4	18	10	9
Fawkner Blues	8	2	2	4	10	20	8
Albury Wodonga	9	1	2	6	13	32	5
Knights Academy	7	1	0	6	3	11	3
Preston Lions	9	0	1	8	7	48	1



Chris Conti reports that on a very wet and slippery pitch the ACTAS and Northern Spirit put on a fine display of football for the hardy fans who turned out in the driving rain last Tuesday night.

Within six minutes, the ACTAS had taken the lead when ACTAS forward, Daniel Aliffi (pictured above), took the ball into the Spirit area and was brought down. Aliffi took the penalty himself and despite Paul Henderson guessing correctly, put the ball firmly past the keeper.

For the next twenty minutes both teams pressed forward and had chances, but it was Spirit who equalised when Simon Catanzaro hit a ripper shot from 25 yards into the top corner giving Tony Giannasca in the ACTAS goal no chance.

Both Giannasca and Henderson were in top form and prevented further goals with a series of technically proficient saves. However, Ryan Griffiths gave Northern Spirit a first half lead after some very good individual work.

In the second half Spirit pressed their advantage with Catanzaro and Griffiths giving the ACTAS defence some problems.

At the Spirit end a lovely flowing move involving Carl Valeri and Goran Veljanovski ended with Paul Ivanic shooting just over.

In the 82nd minute the same three ACTAS players were involved in the equaliser when Valeri and Ivanic set up Veljanovski who made no mistake. In the final ten minutes both teams could have snatched a winner, and ACTAS supporters were on their feet when Ivanic beat five Spirit defenders in a mazy run, but could not squeeze the ball past Henderson who had narrowed the gap very well.

In the end both teams had to be content with sharing the points.

ACTAS: Tony Giannasca, Adrien La Butte, Ian Waldon (Alvaro Guzman), Phil Yarnold, Dom La Butte, Stephen Kemp, Daniel Aliffi, Carl Valeri, Paul Ivanic, Goran Veljanovski, Matt Anstey (Amied Shadmaan).

Northern Spirit: Paul Henderson, Micheal Prentice, Elvis

Olic, Ryan Griffiths, Adam Griffiths (Peter Antar), Todd Macrae, Simon Catanzaro, Simon Miller, Dean Culina, Ross Kethel, James Monie (Derek Kane).

Yellow Cards:

ACTAS: Valeri, Yarnold, D. La Butte.

Spirit: Macrae, Kethel.

Best players:

ACTAS: Giannasca, Veljanovski, Ivanic.

Spirit: Henderson, Culina.

on a roll lately and their one-nil victory guarantees that their fine run continues.

After three successive defeats, the home side have now won eight of their past eleven matches and currently sit in fifth place. Peter Juchniewicz scored what proved to be the winner in the 9th minute.

At Christie Park, the Northern Spirit snatched a win from the jaws of defeat over the Q.A.S. after trailing for most of the match. The visitors took the lead after 19 minutes courtesy of Russell Miner's eleventh goal this season. Miner joins Elias Demourtzidis of the A.I.S. as the competitions leading goalscorer.

The Spirit fought back in the second half and were rewarded when Ryan Griffiths netted a double to give the hosts all three points. Griffiths equalised in the 85th minute and struck two minutes later to ensure that the Spirit celebrated the New Year with a victory.

Valentine Park was the venue for a thrilling three-all draw between the N.S.W.I.S. and the Marconi Stallions Colts. Both teams are stacked with talented youngsters and a free flowing match saw six goals scored. Yet, the Stallions would be disappointed with a point after letting slip a three-goal advantage.

Rod Sandoval, who has found his scoring touch at Marconi, did it again when he scored a double to hand the visitors a two-nil lead at half-time. He struck in the 25th and 37th minutes.

After the break, Adam Burnett extended the lead in the 56th minute as the Stallions seemed to have secured a crushing win. However, the hosts produced a remarkable comeback to share in the spoils.

The advantage was reduced in the 67th minute via Matthew Engele and when Predrag Bojic netted after 81 minutes the scene was set for an intriguing final ten minutes.

A last minute penalty was awarded to the Institute and Peter Gavaghan stepped up and coolly slotted the spot kick away to hand his side a deserved draw.

The late match also produced goals as the Marconi Stallions cruised past the Sydney Olympic Academy by three goals to nil. Both teams are yet to play out a draw this campaign and a result looked inevitable.

A five minute spell after half an hour put the issue beyond doubt. Ryan Manente broke the deadlock in the 33rd minute and the lead was doubled four minutes later when Anthony Mondello found the back of the net. Erick Anabalon ended the scoring in the 66th minute to secure a home win for the steadily improving Stallions.

The Olympians have proven to be an entertaining outfit to watch this season. In their thirteen matches to date, 76 goals have been scored at an average of just under six goals per game. They have the worst defensive record and are the fifth highest scoring team in the competition.

Parramatta Power travelled south to defeat the Wollongong Wolves by three goals to nil and the A.C.T.A.S. travelled north and also did enough to grab a victory over the Northern Spirit Colts by two goals to one.

Catanzaro

The ACTAS followed up the game against Spirit with a hard fought win in a tough encounter against the younger Spirit team - the Spirit Colts - at Christie Park on Sunday evening.

The Spirit Colts began at a brisk pace and deservedly took the lead after 35 minutes with a crisp shot, following some good lead up work by Sean Cranney.

However the ACTAS strikers, Paul Ivanic and Goran Veljanovski, were working very well together and creating a number of chances, one of which Ivanic blasted over the bar and another which Henderson in the Spirit goal made an excellent save.

The ACTAS midfield of Adam Williams, Stephen Kemp, Carl Valeri and Matthew Anstey which had started slowly now began to take control and create further chances.

In the second half, following some good lead up work by Ivanic and Veljanovski, Henderson made a good save but could only put the ball into Valeri's path and he made no mistake for the equaliser.

ACTAS Coach Ray Junna then introduced Daniel Aliffi into the midfield and he added more strength; the ACT, by now, were playing some excellent football and more chances began to develop. From one of these in the 70th minute, Valeri chipped to Veljanovski who controlled and turned in one move and beat Henderson from close range for what was to prove the winner.

The Spirit Colts had to then press for another goal and in one amazing sequence the ball was cleared off the ACTAS line three times; in the final minutes Doug Hynson, making his debut in the ACTAS goal made a brilliant instinctive save to keep the points safe for the Academy, and the defence of the La Butte brothers, Amied Shadmaan, and Ian Waldon stood firm.

Theo Katsaros reports that the new millennium kicked off with the Newcastle Breakers entertaining Sydney United at Breakers Stadium. The Breakers have been

ARSENAL BACK ON TRACK WITH LEEDS WIN

Arsenal cut the gap between themselves and Premiership leaders Leeds to just five points with a 2-0 victory over David O'Leary's men at Highbury in last Tuesday's full round of Premier League.

Fredrik Ljungberg put the Gunners ahead after 32 minutes with his second goal in consecutive matches.

The chance was created by Nigerian star Nwankwo Kanu who fired in a low drive which Leeds goalkeeper Nigel Martyn could only beat out and Swedish international Ljungberg was perfectly placed to slot away the loose ball.

Arsenal took complete command thereafter and Thierry Henry beat Lucas Radebe before firing past Martyn to make it 2-0 just before the hour mark.

The victory takes Arsenal up to third but Leeds hang on to top spot after nearest challengers Manchester United drew 2-2 with Sunderland at the Stadium of Light.

Liverpool continued their excellent run of form with a 3-1 home success against Wimbledon.

The Anfield faithful had to sit through a dreadful first half but their patience was rewarded after 58 minutes when Michael Owen slotted home after a Danny Murphy corner.

But the Dons silenced the celebrations when a quick free-kick released Kenny Cunningham down the right and his cross was nodded in by Marcus Gayle.

A stunning free-kick by Patrik Berger which he curled around the wall put Liverpool back in front on 68 minutes and Robbie Fowler's 150th goal for Liverpool with 10 minutes remaining put the result beyond doubt.

Duncan Ferguson and Alan Shearer inspired Newcastle to a 2-1 victory over Leicester at Filbert Street.

Shearer set up the first for his strike partner, whipping over a low cross which Ferguson was quickest to react to as he turned the ball home from close range.

And the England captain doubled the Magpies' advantage after 53 minutes when he latched onto an inch-perfect pass from Nolberto Solano and took the ball wide of Tim Flowers before sliding his shot into the corner of the net in clinical fashion.

Leicester grabbed a lifeline with seven minutes left when a 25-yard free-kick from Theo Zagorakis bounced awkwardly in front of Steve Harper and found its way into the net.

But it proved too little too late for the injury-hit Foxes, who slipped to their second defeat of the Holiday period.

At the bottom of the table relegation-threatened Bradford, Bradford and Derby all picked up useful points.

Watford grabbed their first Premiership win since mid-September as they claimed a rollercoaster 3-2 home success against fellow strugglers Southampton.

The Hornets looked on course for a comfortable success as David Perpetuini (17) and Xavier Gravelaine (31) handed them a 2-0 half-time advantage.

But Dave Jones' team talk worked wonders for the Saints who levelled matters thanks to two goals in two minutes from Luis Boa Morte (61) and Kevin Davies (63).

However the decisive strike came in the 66th minute when Gravelaine pounced for his second.

The Frenchman volleyed home from the edge of the area and this time Watford were able to hang on to their advantage despite a frantic finale.

Bradford battled to a goalless draw against Everton at Valley Parade.

The Toffees enjoyed the better of the first half but it was the Bantams who looked the more likely to break the deadlock in the second period.

Dean Saunders and Lee Mills both went close to scoring for Paul Jewell's side but a combination of Everton 'keeper Paul Gerrard and the woodwork kept them out.

Derby too picked up a point after a creditable 1-1 draw with West Ham at

Upton Park.

Dean Sturridge gave the Rams a shock lead after just four minutes but a moment of sublime quality from Paolo Di Canio brought West Ham back into the game.

The Italian, captaining the Hammers in the absence of Steve Lomas, left two defenders trailing in his wake before curling an unstoppable shot past Mart Poom on 21 minutes.

Manchester City went four points clear at the top of Nationwide One thanks to a far-from-convincing 2-1 win over Grimsby at Maine Road last Tuesday.

Kevin Horlock put City in front with a 25-yarder after five minutes but Stacy Coldicott pulled one back after 27 minutes, cashing in on a square pass from Jack Lester.

Town went down to their eighth away defeat on the trot when Horlock clinched things with a minute to go.

Huddersfield lost their unbeaten home record when first-half goals from Andy Hunt and John Robinson gave Charlton a 2-1 win at the McAlpine Stadium.

Town's late reply came from a Marcus Stewart header, and they stay second ahead of Charlton on goal difference.

Ipswich had keeper Richard Wright to thank for their 1-0 win over Stockport.

He saved a Tony Dinning penalty - and then pulled off another from the follow-up.

County saw their four-match winning run ended by Jamie Scowcroft's 34th minute winner to leave Ipswich unbeaten in 10.

Barnsley struggled to break down unadventurous Port Vale but ended 3-1 winners after Eric Tinkler broke the deadlock in the 63rd minute.

Darren Barnard made it two before Steve Rimmer was sent off for serious foul play.

Despite Vale pulling one back through Jeff Minton, Neil Shipperley got a late third for Barnsley to ensure victory.

Norwich have won only once in 18 visits to Molineux and their luck was out when Chris Llewellyn turned the ball into his own net on 57 minutes to give Wolves a 1-0 victory.

Fulham looked to be heading for their fifth successive goalless draw until Paul Devlin broke the deadlock for Sheffield United six minutes from time.

Two minutes later Marcus Bent side-footed home a volley to give the Blades a second Christmas win by 2-0.

Fulham are now without a goal in more than seven-and-a-half hours.

The turning point had come 10 minutes from time when Barry Hayles was sent off for his second bookable offence.

Portsmouth, already beaten by Blackburn twice in the Worthington Cup, went in front through Steve Claridge after 14 minutes.

But Christian Dailly equalised after a corner on 33 minutes and Egil Ostenstad made the result 2-1, condemning Pompey to a 15th game without a win.

QPR, unbeaten at home this season, beat Crewe 1-0 with Stuart Wardley's 75th minute goal the decider.

There were three goals in as many minutes at Prenton Park where Tranmere led through Clint Hill after 11 minutes against bottom club Swindon - but the visitors struck back through Chris Hay just a minute later.

Wayne Allison (13 and 26) then netted twice against his old club as Rovers ran out 3-1 winners.

More trouble for bottom side Swindon saw Lee Collins sent off for a second yellow card.

Walsall are only just above them after losing out 3-2 to Crystal Palace in a thriller at Selhurst Park.

Michael Ricketts gave the Saddlers the lead after 32 minutes, but Matt



Thierry Henry ... scored Arsenal's second goal in the 2-0 victory over Leeds United.

Svensson levelled from the penalty spot and Wayne Carlisle put Palace in the driving seat after 64 minutes.

Ricketts equalised and Walsall were seeking to end a sequence of six without a win until Hayden Mullins grabbed the points four minutes from the end.

Bolton had Claus Jensen to thank for a point at West Brom after his 82nd minute-equaliser.

His goal cancelled out the opener from West Brom's Darryl Burgess on the hour.

Nottingham Forest's Marlon Harewood scored the only goal of the game nine minutes from time to condemn Birmingham to a 1-0 defeat at the City Ground.

Rangers go into the new Millennium as the team to beat after maintaining their four-point lead at the top of the Premier League with a hard-earned 1-1 draw at Celtic last Tuesday.

However Celtic were left cursing their luck with Lubomir Moravcik twice striking the woodwork and Mark Viduka hitting the post.

Australian striker Viduka put them ahead after 18 minutes but Billy Dodds marked his Old Firm debut by grabbing the equaliser eight minutes later.

After a rousing first half hour, the game tailed off but happily there was no repeat of the dreadful scenes that marred the last Parkhead encounter between the clubs in May.

Celtic had come within inches of taking the lead after 10 minutes when a shot from Viduka rattled the post after a clever back heel from Paul Lambert had split the defence.

Moravcik was desperately unlucky not to put them further ahead after 25 minutes when a first time shot from Jackie McNamara's cross rattled the underside of the bar.

However Rangers equalised against the run of play after 25 minutes with a simple goal.

Tony Vidmar playing out of position on the right side of defence released Dodds in the penalty area.

The former Dundee United striker turned Tebily and fired a shot beyond keeper Jonathan Gould then celebrated in style.

Rangers began the second half brightly but it was Celtic however who again rattled the bar in the 67th minute with another delightful move.

McNamara floated in a marvellous cross from the right and Moravcik saw his header come back off the bar after taking a deflection off Reyna.

Stubbs came to Celtic's rescue in the 70th minute, making a dramatic goal-line

clearance after Wallace's shot had beaten keeper Gould.

And, despite a clutch of late substitutions, both sides were content to share the spoils.

Billy Dodds enjoyed a great Old Firm debut as he scored the goal that gave Rangers a point.

Dodds said: "It was a great feeling to score in an Old Firm derby but it was most important not to get beat today.

"We're in a great position now and long may it continue. It was a hectic first 15 minutes and Celtic caused us problems.

"They hit the woodwork a few times but I feel a draw was a fair result. It's great to come here and not get beaten."

Australian striker Viduka, who was scoring his 19th goal of the season, thought the Hoops had narrowly deserved to win.

"This was a very important game for us and we are a little disappointed we did not win as we had a lot of chances and hit the post twice - but sometimes you need a bit of luck.

"Our aim is to win the league and there was a lot of pressure on us as if we had lost the game it would have been very hard to get back into it at the top.

Dundee and St Johnstone had to settle for a point apiece at Dens Park.

The visitors dominated early on and the opening goal eventually came in the 44th minute.

An O'Neil cross was headed goalwards by Nathan Lowndes but Douglas managed to get a hand to it. Fortunately for the Perth men the ball came back out and went off Lowndes and into the net.

Dundee were brighter after the break and an equaliser arrived in the 77th minute.

A Barry Smith cross was met by Willie Falconer and his header gave Allan Main no chance.

Struggling Aberdeen overcame bogey team Dundee United 3-1 in an action-packed game which saw three penalties, two of which were brilliantly saved by the keepers.

The Dons victory came courtesy of their Moroccan contingent as both Hicham Zerouali and Rachid Belabed scored goals in this epic encounter.

David Hannah had given the Tangerines the lead early in the match.

In the other match of the day, Hibernian substitute Kenny Miller netted a dramatic injury-time equaliser to rescue an unlikely point in a 2-2 draw with Kilmarnock.

Kilmarnock had seemed certain to record only their second away league win of the season when taking a two-goal lead into the interval.

Andy Smith netted his first goal for the Ayrshire side and the impressive Christophe Cocard added the second from the penalty spot.

COMPILED BY INSIDE SOCCER

UK League Round Up

VIDUKA - WIZARD FROM DOWN UNDER



Tradition took its rightful place at Celtic Park when a seasonal legend made an annual appearance on the TV screens of the nation.

Since broadcasting schedules have so

far denied the country another chance to the view the only Christmas film that is worth watching, Mark Viduka produced his own version of The Wizard of Oz against Rangers at Parkhead instead.

The Australian international striker was in mesmeric form in the last Old Firm game of the century and should have had the Celtic faithful dancing all the way home.

A little bigger than Dorothy, Viduka is no less light on his feet and there was no need for any ruby footwear for him to dazzle Dick Advocaat's defence.

Unlike the myth of the main man in the film, however, this wizard is proving with every match that the more you probe for substance, the greater his resources seem to be.

During a torrid period of the first half, the 24-year-old forward was running at Lorenzo Amoroso and Craig Moore, striking fear and panic deep within them every time he dropped deep to collect the ball.

A brilliant link with Paul Lambert saw him crash a shot off a post before he got his just rewards in the 18th minute with a superb first-time hit which took Moore by surprise and left Lionel Charbonnier watching as the ball snuggled in the corner of his net.

Since arriving belatedly in Glasgow, Viduka has been doubted in everything from his talent to his commitment to the Celtic shirt. His usual goal celebration was abandoned, however, for a go at kissing the club badge.

When foreigners indulge in such veneration there's always the whiff of theatrics but what followed Viduka's little act spoke volumes about his feelings.

In the 29th minute of the match, Rangers figured out how to best preserve their four-point cushion over the winter break and when the solution arrived it came dressed as a not-

so-friendly clatter between two team-mates.

Craig Moore's sliding charge on his Australian international colleague followed the well-worn defender's rule of thumb which states 'take the ball first and the man after'.

The Rangers defender cleared the danger and caught Viduka's right knee with his trailing leg and it looked for a couple of minutes like the goalscorer would be forced to retire from the match.

If there was ever any doubt that he had the heart and stomach for the battle, it was dispelled. His first taste of the Old Firm battle was the three-goal drubbing last April in which the game seemed to leave him completely cold.

His second was the 4-2 defeat at Ibrox this season when all his conjuring couldn't prevent the Rangers juggernaut from ramming through Celtic. Two games, two heavy defeats and maybe most significantly, no goals for the striker.

There's even a section of observers who swear that the former Croatia Zagreb player is only good when the going is similarly jolly i.e. a barrel-load of goals against Aberdeen and other sitting ducks. John Barnes made the point that it was against their city rivals that he could measure the progress of his own side and that same test was true in miniature for Viduka.

It was one he passed with more flying colours than a rainbow. "There were discussions at half-time that I wasn't going to play in the second because the nature of the injury was quite sensitive. But I wanted to play and I wanted us to win the game because it was very important to win it," said Viduka afterwards.

Unfortunately for Celtic, they weren't to benefit from their star man's wholehearted

determination to soldier on, as he didn't recover the conviction in the remainder of the match that he had displayed in that opening spell.

What he did to Rangers then was reminiscent of Henrik Larsson's many minutes of torturing blue-shirted opponents. Like the Swede, Viduka possesses amazing sleight of foot and retains the same upper body strength which simply repels defenders with a bounce.

He spoke warmly in the aftermath of the drawn outcome of the ambition he harboured to take on new responsibility in the wake of Larsson's injury and of his belief that Celtic can still win the championship in the second half of the season.

"My view is that I want to win the league with Celtic and we have a good bunch of players together now and the new guy is coming in from Brazil," he said. "If we had lost this game, it would have been an uphill battle and very difficult for us to come back - and though it was even in the end, I thought we were unlucky to draw."

"We have a lot of prospects, especially for the second half of the season and we're more consistent than in the middle bit of the first half. Anything is possible and we have a very good chance in the second half to win the league."

"A lot of people at the time when Henrik broke his leg were saying that we were a one-man team and we have no chance now that we've lost Henrik. Myself and all the other players wanted to prove that's not the case."

"Henrik is our main player but the easy thing was to put your head down and give up and I wanted to do the opposite."

Whether that will be in his first full season or not remains to be seen. However, his own impressive transition from Celtic's Tin Man to master magician is now complete.

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	GD
Leeds	20	14	2	4	34	22	44	12
Man Utd	19	13	4	2	50	25	43	25
Arsenal	20	12	3	5	36	20	39	16
Sunderland	20	11	5	4	35	24	38	11
Liverpool	20	11	4	5	31	17	37	14
Tottenham	18	9	3	6	30	22	30	8
Leicester	20	9	2	9	28	28	29	0
Everton	20	7	7	6	33	28	28	5
Chelsea	17	8	3	6	23	18	27	5
West Ham	19	7	6	6	22	21	27	1
Middlesbrough	19	8	3	8	23	26	27	-3
Aston Villa	19	7	4	8	18	20	25	-2
Coventry	19	6	6	7	26	22	24	4
Newcastle	20	6	5	9	32	35	23	-3
Wimbledon	20	4	10	6	31	35	22	-4
Southampton	19	4	5	10	23	32	17	-9
Bradford	19	4	5	10	15	29	17	-14
Derby	20	4	4	12	17	32	16	-15
Watford	20	4	2	14	17	42	14	-25
Sheff Wed	18	2	3	13	16	42	9	-26

Preston	23	14	7	2	38	19	49	19
Bristol Rovers	23	14	5	4	31	15	47	16
Millwall	24	13	6	5	38	25	45	13
Burnley	23	12	7	4	33	19	43	14
Gillingham	22	12	5	5	40	26	41	14
Notts County	24	11	6	7	35	26	39	9
Stoke	23	10	8	5	33	21	38	12
Brentford	24	10	7	7	36	32	37	4
Bournemouth	24	10	4	10	35	35	34	0
Bury	22	7	9	6	35	29	30	6
Luton	23	8	6	9	26	31	30	-5
Wycombe	23	7	8	8	27	30	29	-3
Bristol City	23	5	11	7	27	29	26	-2
Oldham	23	6	7	10	24	29	25	-5
Oxford Utd	23	6	6	11	22	31	24	-9
Scunthorpe	23	6	6	11	23	36	24	-13
Cardiff	23	5	8	10	24	30	23	-6
Wrexham	23	4	10	9	21	35	22	-14
Colchester	23	5	6	12	26	46	21	-20
Reading	22	4	7	11	25	40	19	-15
Cambridge Utd	23	3	7	13	30	40	16	-10
Blackpool	23	3	7	13	22	41	16	-19
Chesterfield	22	2	8	12	13	25	14	-12

Celtic	18	13	1	4	53	16	40	37
Dundee Utd	19	9	3	7	25	29	30	-4
Motherwell	17	7	6	4	28	30	27	-2
Hibernian	20	6	7	7	32	35	25	-3
Hearts	18	5	5	8	26	28	20	-2
St Johnstone	18	5	5	8	18	23	20	-5
Dundee	17	6	1	10	21	28	19	-7
Kilmarnock	18	2	7	9	18	28	13	-10
Aberdeen	18	3	3	12	20	55	12	-35

SCOTTISH DIVISION ONE

St Mirren	19	13	4	2	47	22	43	25
Dunfermline	19	11	7	1	37	16	40	21
Livingston	19	9	5	5	35	27	32	8
Falkirk	20	9	4	7	33	31	31	2
Raith	18	8	5	5	33	27	29	6
Inverness CT	20	6	6	8	28	31	24	-3
Ayr	20	6	5	9	24	28	23	-4
Airdrie	20	5	6	9	16	34	21	-18
Greenock Morton	20	5	4	11	27	35	19	-8
Clydebank	19	0	4	15	13	42	4	-29

ENGLISH DIVISION ONE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	GD
Man City	25	16	3	6	39	20	51	19
Huddersfield	25	14	5	6	44	26	47	18
Charlton	24	14	5	5	42	26	47	16
Ipswich	25	13	7	5	41	26	46	15
Barnsley	24	14	3	7	48	36	45	12
Stockport	25	11	7	7	31	33	40	-2
Blackburn	24	9	9	6	31	24	36	7
QPR	25	9	9	7	34	30	36	4
Fulham	25	8	12	5	24	20	36	4
Wolverhampton	24	9	8	7	28	24	35	4
Tranmere	25	10	5	10	37	36	35	1
Norwich	24	9	7	8	23	22	34	1
Birmingham	24	8	8	8	33	28	32	5
Bolton	24	8	8	8	33	28	32	5
Sheff Utd	25	8	6	11	31	39	30	-8
Crystal Palace	25	7	8	10	34	40	29	-6
Nottm Forest	25	7	7	11	26	29	28	-3
West Brom	25	5	12	8	24	30	27	-6
Crewe	25	7	6	12	24	32	27	-8
Grimsby	25	7	5	13	25	43	26	-18
Port Vale	24	5	8	11	27	34	23	-7
Portsmouth	25	5	8	12	27	39	23	-12
Walsall	25	4	7	14	24	42	19	-18
Swindon	25	3	9	13	18	41	18	-23

ENGLISH DIVISION THREE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	GD
Barnet	24	13	6	5	34	24	45	10
Rotherham	24	13	5	6	37	17	44	20
Swansea	24	13	5	6	24	14	44	10
Darlington	24	12	7	5	32	16	43	16
Hartlepool	24	12	3	9	32	24	39	8
Macclesfield	24	11	6	7	35	30	39	5
Northampton	24	11	5	8	26	22	38	4
Halifax	24	11	4	9	27	25	37	2
Rochdale	23	10	6	7	22	16	36	6
Torquay	23	10	6	7	28	24	36	4
Plymouth	23	9	8	6	30	25	35	5
Peterborough	22	10	5	7	30	29	35	1
Southend	24	9	6	9	32	34	33	-2
Cheltenham	23	9	5	9	23	21	32	2
Brighton	23	8	7	8	34	28	31	6
Hull	23	8	6	9	22	22	30	0
Lincoln City	23	7	7	9	33	37	28	-4
Mansfield	22	7	5	10	27	32	26	-5
Exeter	23	7	5	11	26	32	26	-6
York	23	6	7	10	22	31	25	-9
Shrewsbury	24	6	4	14	22	37	22	-15
Carlisle	24	4	7	13	21	39	19	-18
Leyton Orient	23	4	5	14	19	33	17	-14
Chester	24	4	4	16	21	47	16	-26

SCOTTISH DIVISION TWO

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	GD
Clyde	19	9	6	4	26	15	33	11
Alloa	18	7	9	2	23	18	30	5
Stranraer	19	6	10	3	27	19	28	8
Ross County	17	8	4	5	19	15	28	4
Arbroath	19	7	7	5	30	27	28	3
Stirling	19	7	3	9	37	34	24	3
Partick	19	6	5	8	15	19	23	-4
Stenhousemuir	18	6	4	8	21	24	22	-3
Hamilton	18	4	6	8	18	25	18	-7
Queen of South	18	3	4	11	19	39	13	-20

SCOTTISH DIVISION THREE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	GD
Queen's Park	19	11	4	4	32	23	37	9
East Fife	17	10	2	5	23	19	32	4
Berwick	18	8	5	5	27	16	29	11
Forfar	17	7	7	3	30	19	28	11
Cowdenbeath	19	8	4	7	29	23	28	6
Dumbarton	18	8	3	7	29	29	27	0
Montrose	19	6	3	10	22	28	21	-6
East Stirling	17	5	4	8	14	20	19	-8
Brechin	18	5	3	10	22	30	18	-8
Albion	18	2	5	11	18	39	11	-21

* Monday's results not included.

ENGLISH DIVISION TWO

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	GD
Wigan	23	14	9	0	45	19	51	26

SCOTTISH PREMIER LEAGUE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	GD
Rangers	17	14	2	1	45	14	44	31

NATIONAL SOCCER LEAGUE - ROUND FIFTEEN

ADELAIDE FORCE v CANBERRA CANNONS

1	Vilson Knezevic	1	David Milin
2	Ivan Zelic	2	Toplica Popovich
3	Alex Tobin	3	Danny Burt
4	Carlo Talladira	4	Nicholas Purdue
5	Damian Mori	5	Jason Polak
6	Carl Veart	6	David Winnie
7	Nick Sabljak	7	Daniel Watkins
8	Aurelio Vidmar	8	Alex Castro
9	Nathan Day	9	Michael Musitano
10	John Fusco	10	David Arranz
11	Michael Cartwright	11	Brian Hamilton
12	Louis Brain	12	Harry James
13	Matthew Kemp	13	Glen Kolpak
14	Angelo Costanzo	14	Ilija Prenzowski
15	Bradley Hassell	15	Robbie Hooker
16		16	Nikola Mrdja
17		17	Geoff Howarth
18		18	Grant Barlow
19		19	Scott Conlon
20		20	Elliot Zwangobani
21	Dong Ki Kim	21	PJ Roberts
22	Jonathan Lihou	22	Ivo De Jesus
23		23	Gabriel Gonzalez
		24	Angelo Konstantinou

Venue: Hindmarsh Stadium - Friday 7 January 2000 8.00PM
 Head to Head: Played 9 Force wins: 8 Cannons wins: 1 Draws 1
 Last Week: Force 1-1 away draw with Falcons

NEWCASTLE BREAKERS v SYDNEY OLYMPIC

1	Bob Catlin	1	Jim Kourtis
2	Shane Pryce	2	Scott Thomas
3	Andrew Roberts	3	Chris Zoricich
4	Adam Sanderson	4	Peter Tsekenis
5	Todd McManus	5	Scott Baillie
6	Glenn Sprod	6	Ante Juric
7	Travis Dodd	7	Zlatko Arambasic
8	Mark Wilson	8	Marcus Phillips
9	Chris Tancheski	9	Pablo Cardozo
10	John Buonavoglia	10	Brett Emerton
11	Luke Tomich	11	Chris Kalantzis
12	Robert Angievski	12	Sebastian Sinozic
13	Brad Wieczorek	13	Gabriel Mendez
14	Greg Owens	14	Lindsay Wilson
15	Joshua Ferguson	15	Paul Kohler
16	Vasko Trpceviski	16	John Kyriazopoulos
17	Paul Wheeler	17	Nick Carle
18	Andrew Harper	18	George Bouhoutsos
19	Chad Mansley	19	Lee Miot
20	Bradley Swancott	20	Pete Zorbas
21	Peter Juchniewicz	21	Dylan Macallister
22	Glen Moore	22	Norman Tome
23	Damien Smith	23	Hussein Jomaa
24		24	Adam Ciantar
25		25	John Karoubas
26		26	

Venue: Breakers Stadium - Friday 7 January 2000 7.30PM
 Head to Head: Played 16 wins: Breakers 3 Olympic wins: 7 Draws 6
 Breakers 1-0 home win over Sydney United

NORTHERN SPIRIT v SYDNEY UNITED

1	John Perosh	1	John Crawley
2	Robert Enes	2	Ray Younis
3	Matthew Langdon	3	Mark Racker
4	Matthew Bingley	4	Velimir Kupresak
5	Mark Rudan	5	Eddie Bosnar
6	Luke Casserley	6	Vince Savocca
7	Robbie Slater	7	Mirko Jurilj
8	Tony Perinich	8	Nahuel Arrarte
9	David Seal	9	Mario Jermen
10	Troy Cranney	10	Ante Moric
11	Simon Catanzaro	11	Tom Pondeljak
12	Philip Moss	12	Tom Maric
13	Shane Lyons	13	Matthew Zec
14	Anthony Faria	14	Kain Rastall
15	Paul Bilokapic	15	Aytec Genc
16	Paul Wearne	16	Joe Moric
17	Jess Van Stratten	17	Nick Bosevski
18	Michael Cunico	18	Steve Bozinovski
19	Paul Henderson	19	Greg Saric
20	Adam Snyder	20	Steve Tolios
21	Elvis Olic	21	Ante Deak
22	Ryan Griffiths	22	Brett Hughes
23	Jack Sobczyk	23	
24	Adam Griffiths	24	
25	Abbas Saad	25	
26	Ian Crook	26	
27	Sean Cranney	27	

Venue: North Sydney Oval - Friday 7 January 2000 8.00PM
 Head to Head: Played 3 Spirit: 1 United wins: 2 Draws 0
 Last week: Spirit 0-2 home loss to Strikers
 United 1-0 away loss to Breakers

BRISBANE STRIKERS v MELBOURNE KNIGHTS

1	Clint Bolton	1	Vilson Knezevic
2	Glenn Gwynne	2	Ivan Zelic
3	Shane Stefanutto	3	Alex Tobin
4	Andrew Davidson	4	Carlo Talladira
5	Matthew Belli	5	Damian Mori
6	Brad Ditton	6	Carl Veart
7	Shane Smeltz	7	Nick Sabljak
8	David Pilic	8	Aurelio Vidmar
9	Paul Foster	9	Nathan Day
10	Wayne Srhoj	10	John Fusco
11	Greg Di Losa	11	Michael Cartwright
12	Pete Dwyer	12	Louis Brain
13	Stuart McClaren	13	Matthew Kemp
14	Jade North (below)	14	Angelo Costanzo
15	Leo Langone	15	Bradley Hassell
16	Peter Grierson	16	
17	Jeromy Harris	17	
18	Nick Meredith	18	
19	Wade Baldwin	19	
20	Daniel Duke	20	
		21	Dong Ki Kim
		22	Jonathan Lihou
		23	

Venue: Suncorp Metway Stadium - Saturday 8 January 2000 7.00PM
 Head to Head: Played 18 Strikers wins: 4 Knights wins: 12 Draws 2
 Last week: Strikers 0-2 away win over Spirit
 Knights 3-0 away loss to Stallions

PERTH GLORY v GIPPSLAND FALCONS

1	Robert Trajkovski	1	Bojo Jevdjovic
2	Jamie Harnwell	2	Dean Fak
3	Vinko Buljbasic	3	Manny Gotis
4	Gareth Naven	4	Mehmed Durakovic
5	Scott Miller	5	Jeff Hopkins
6	Troy Halpin	6	Brian MacNichol
7	Alistair Edwards	7	Andy Vargas
8	Bobby Despotoski	8	Clayton Bell
9	Kasey Wehrman	9	Robbie Puca
10	Peter Buljan	10	Sandy Robertson
11	Jamos Afkos	11	John Hutchinson
12	Dion Valle	12	Peter Kakos
13	Edgar Junior	13	Adrian Savage
14	Con Boutsianis	14	Doug Marcina
15	Vas Kalogeracos	15	Jonathon Buhugiar
16	Hamilton Thorp	16	Juan Nilo
17	John Carbone	17	Will Hastie
18	Tony Franken	18	Michael Katz
19	Ivan Ergic	19	Ivan Mandic
20	Jason Petkovic	20	Simon Miotto
21			
22			
23			

Venue: Perth Oval - Sunday 9 January 2000 5.00PM
 Head to Head: Played 7 Glory: 4 Falcons wins: 2 Draws 1
 Last week: Falcons 1-1 home draw with Force



LIVE FRIDAY 7 JANUARY 8.15 PM
C7 SPORT CHANNEL 13

CARLTON



V



FOOTBALL KINGZ

CARLTON

- 1 Dean Anastasiadis
- 2 Dave McPherson
- 3 Craig Deans
- 4 Simon Colosimo
- 5 Sean Douglas
- 6 Andrew Marth
- 7 Stuart Slater
- 8 Mark Atkinson
- 9 Alex Moreira
- 10 Lubo Lapsansky
- 11 Archie Thompson
- 12 Mike Conroy
- 13 Steve Martin
- 14 John Markovski
- 15 Con Anthopoulos
- 16 David Terminello
- 17 Joe Tricarico
- 18 David Della Rocca
- 19 Serdar Pir
- 20 Adrian Cagalj
- 21 Andrew Packer (right)
- 22 Angelo Motsiopoulos
- 23 Colin Azzopardi
- 24 Joshua Kennedy



KINGZ

- 1 Michael Utting
- 2 Che Bunce
- 3 Riki Van Steeden
- 4 Fabio Macolino
- 5 Jonathon Perry
- 6 Marcus Stergiopoulos
- 7 Wynton Rufer
- 8 Chris Jackson
- 9 Fred de Jong
- 10 Dino Mennillo
- 11 Robbie Middleby
- 12 Harry Ngata
- 13 Levent Osman
- 14 Batrum Suri
- 15 Ivan Vicelich (right)
- 16 Lee Jones
- 17 Maciel Edmilson
- 18 Stuart Riddle
- 19 Leigh Kenyon
- 20 Jason Batty
- 21 David Moya
- 22 Aaron Silva
- 23 Simon Eaddy



Venue: Olympic Park
Friday 7 January 8.15PM



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